



# Peacemaking

Photo: Reuters



At a landmark peace summit hailed as a major success, world leaders agreed to launch a coordinated campaign against terrorism and reinforce the peace process

## Arafat satisfied

PALESTINIAN President Yasser Arafat, following a 45-minute meeting with US President Bill Clinton yesterday, told reporters he expected the Israeli blockade of Palestinian territories to be totally lifted "in a few days," AFP reported.

Arafat and Clinton met in Sharm El-Sheikh soon after the conclusion of the Peacemakers' Summit. They were joined by French President Jacques Chirac towards the end of their meeting.

Arafat said his discussions with Clinton dealt with "everything" concerning the peace process, including the efforts deployed jointly by Clinton and President Hosni Mubarak.

Commenting on the summit, Arafat said it was "positive," and satisfied most Palestinian demands.

## Under siege

ISRAELI officials said yesterday that Israel has eased its closure of the Gaza Strip for 24 hours to allow shipments of food and medicine into the zone. Thirty-five truckloads of basic products were due to enter Gaza from Israel through the Karni crossing, an army spokesman said.

However, a ban on lorries from Gaza travelling into Israel remained in place and Palestinians were still barred from leaving the strip or their villages and towns in the West Bank.

## Libyan praise

LIBYA yesterday reiterated its opposition to the Peacemakers Summit, but praised Egypt for trying to focus the summit on strengthening the Middle East peace process instead of concentrating on combating terrorism. A commentary by the official news agency Jana received in Tunis said, "When Egypt talks in the name of the Arab nation and defends it, it deserves support from all Arabs from the Atlantic to the Gulf."

## Qatar invite

QATAR, spearheading Arab Gulf countries in normalising relations with Israel, issued an open invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres yesterday to make a groundbreaking first visit to the Gulf country.

In his speech to the Peacemakers Summit, Qatar's Interior Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalifa said, "I officially invite Prime Minister Peres to visit Qatar whenever it suits him."

In a dramatic show of solidarity, world leaders, including Presidents Hosni Mubarak and Bill Clinton, vowed yesterday to work together in a war on terrorism, cutting off the financial sources of terrorists, and to revive the faltering Middle East peace effort.

The gathering of kings, presidents, sheikhs, prime ministers, princes and senior officials at the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh followed four suicide bombing attacks by Islamist militants that killed 58 people in Israel in the space of 10 days. Israel retaliated by blockading the West Bank and Gaza and confining Palestinians to their villages and towns, forcing the peace process to grind to a halt.

The Summit of the Peacemakers declared determination to continue working for a lasting peace in the Middle East and said it would reinforce the peace process politically and economically.

"Now through the region, as well as the world, there are peacemakers who stand against terror," Clinton said in a joint news conference with Mubarak.

Mubarak, who played a key role in brokering peace between Israel and the Palestinians, hailed the summit as a success, saying all the leaders reiterated "their profound commitment to the promotion of peace and security throughout the region."

"It is our hope that the peace process will be activated and revived without delay," he said. Mubarak also expressed hope that the crippling closure of Palestinian territories imposed after the suicide attacks "will be eased and lifted as soon as possible."

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Israelis "can sleep more easily" after the strong stand taken by the 29 participants in the summit.

"Peace and security are two sides of the same coin," Clinton said, noting that the fate and prosperity of Israel and its neighbours are inter-linked.

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak, in statements made to *Al-Ahram Weekly's* Nevine Khalil, said that it was necessary to convene the peacemakers summit because the peace process "deteriorated sharply" following the bombings in Israel. Noting that terrorist activity cannot be pre-empted "100 per cent," Mubarak said: "So we found it very important to call for an international conference to show that terrorism is being denounced by a large majority of world leaders."

Mubarak added: "We expected this [the bombings] from people who don't want peace and we should realise that there are people who

## Space to act

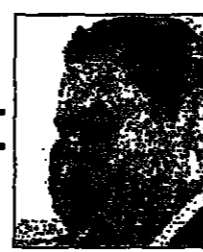
don't want peace."

Asked whether the conference achieved results other than those contained in the final declaration, Mubarak replied: "There are things which are not being declared." But he said the conference "gave room for [Palestinian leader Yasser] Arafat to act" and encouraged Israeli Prime Min-

ister Shimon Peres to ease the blockade imposed on the Palestinian territories. Mubarak described the closure as "very bad."

Asked whether the summit discussions covered the countries which give refuge to terrorists, Mubarak said: "Yes we did discuss it."

Answering another question



on how the countries promoting terrorism should be determined, Mubarak replied: "This should be left to bodies like the United Nations, for example. They have named Libya, but Libya does not do anything."

[Libyan leader Moammar] Gaddafi speaks in anger because of the sanctions imposed on his country."

On Syria's boycott of the summit, Mubarak said: "They said they won't come as long as their land remains occupied. I told them that they shouldn't miss this opportunity to say whatever they want to say and that staying away is just not right. However, they have their own reasons."

terrorist snake."

Standing outside a sun-drenched hotel in the Red Sea resort with Clinton, Mubarak said the fight for peace "will triumph over the forces of doom and gloom."

Mubarak and Clinton, co-hosts of the summit, opened the meeting with separate messages to Palestinians and Israelis. "Do not resort to despair," Mubarak told Palestinians. "Do not give in to calls of defeatism."

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, a co-sponsor of the peace effort, said: "Terrorists are criminals and we should agree they should be arrested in any country regardless of how much time passed since their acts."

Even as the leaders fretted about terrorism, Israeli police reported that they received intelligence warnings that Hamas planned to carry out a fresh attack during Clinton's overnight visit to Israel Wednesday and Thursday, the AP said.

Issuing a direct warning to terrorists, Clinton said: "To the forces of hatred and violence I say, and let us all say, you kill yourselves and others in the aim of killing peace. Yet, today, as you see, peace survives, and peace will grow stronger. You will not succeed. Your day has passed."

Peres told the world leaders Israel has suffered pain but not despair and will do all it takes to defeat terrorism. Directing his remarks at Iran, which was not invited to the summit, he said: "It is the regime which initiates, promotes and exports violence and fanaticism. Tehran has become the capital of terror."

Syrian-Israeli negotiations aimed at a land-for-peace accord were suspended by Israel after the bombings. The United States is hoping for a resumption soon. Also, State Department officials said yesterday that Israel and the Palestinians should get on with the next stage of their negotiations over Jerusalem and other issues in May.

## The Sharm El-Sheikh declaration

Below is the full text of the summit's declaration, signed by Clinton and Mubarak

"The summit of peacemakers has just concluded. This meeting took place at a time when the peace process confronts serious threats. The summit had three fundamental objectives: to enhance the peace process, to promote security and to combat terrorism."

"Accordingly, participants here today: Express their full support for the Middle East peace process and their determination that this process continue in order to accomplish a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region."

"Affirm their determination to promote security and stability and to prevent the enemies of peace from achieving their ultimate objective of destroying the real opportunity for peace in the region."

"Re-emphasise their strong condemnation of all acts of terror in all its abhorrent forms, whatever its motivations, and whoever its perpetrators, including the recent attacks in Israel, consider them alien to the moral and spiritual values declared by all the peoples of the region, and reaffirm their intention to stand staunchly against all such acts, and to urge all governments to join them in this condemnation and opposition."

"To that end, we decided:

"[A] To support the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, the continuation of the negotiating process, and politically, economically to reinforce it, to enhance the security situation for both

with special attention to the current and pressing economic needs of the Palestinians."

"[B] To support continuation of the negotiating process in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement."

"[C] To work together to promote security and stability in the region by developing effective and practical means of cooperation and further assistance."

"[D] To promote coordination efforts to stop acts of terror on bilateral, regional and international levels, ensuring instigators of such acts are brought to justice, supporting efforts by all parties to prevent their territories from being used for terrorist purposes and preventing terrorist organisations from engaging in recruitment, supplying arms or fund-raising."

"[E] To exert maximum efforts to identify and determine the sources of financing for these groups and to cooperate in cutting them off, and by providing training, equipment and other forms of support to those taking steps against groups using violence and terror to undermine peace, security or stability."

"[F] To form a working group open to all summit participants to prepare recommendations on how best to implement the decisions contained in the statement through ongoing work and to report to the participants within 30 days."

The declaration was signed by the summit's co-hosts, Presidents Bill Clinton and Hosni Mubarak.

## US and Israel to sign defence pact

THE US and Israel were expected to announce today a major Memorandum of Understanding, believed to be the most important executive agreement upgrading security ties between the two states.

US President Clinton flew to Israel yesterday after attending the Peacemakers Summit. He was expected to work out the final details of the security package during an unprecedented meeting with Israel's inner cabinet today. He was joined by his top security advisers and officials from civilian and military intelligence, including head of the CIA John Deutch.

The memorandum was due to be announced at a joint press conference by Clinton and Prime Minister Shimon Peres, and formally signed in Washington by the Israeli leader in late April.

The principal elements of the agreement were expected to include, according to the AFP news agency, granting Israel the same access to US military technology as that accorded to Washington's NATO allies; the supply of additional high-tech equipment to fight terrorism, including explosive detonation devices; and financial help to pay for the assistance.

The US would also pledge to ensure that Israel maintains a qualitative military advantage over its Arab neighbours. This would include heightened cooperation in developing defences against attack by long-range missiles and non-conventional weapons and the possibility of fast-track emergency arms shipments and the stockpiling of US weapons in Israel.

Both sides agreed to create a permanent joint US-Israeli commission which would meet twice yearly to discuss security matters and efforts to draw up a regional Middle East defence plan.

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### Commentary:

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INSIDE



The British Council  
in co-operation with  
The Ministry of Culture  
presents  
Oxford Stage Company



CHLORIDE  
كلوريد



National Cultural Centre  
Cairo Opera House



## Cairo

Al Gomhuria Theatre, Abdeen  
20 - 21 March 1996 at 8.00 pm  
Tickets LE 50, 35, 25 and 10  
Matinee on 21 March 1996 at 2 pm  
Tickets LE 25, 15, 10, 5

## Alexandria

Alexandria Conference Centre  
23 March 1996 at 8.00 pm  
Tickets LE 35, 25, 15, 10

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, in an exclusive interview with **Nevine Khalil**, stressed the need to save the peace process, and said that the summit would lead to more economic assistance for the Palestinians

Osama El-Baz, President Mubarak's political adviser travelled to Jerusalem on the eve of the summit to discuss the proceedings and "the mutual desire to make a success out of this conference." But why the need for this emergency shuttle? "There were points that had been raised, and we wouldn't have had the time or the facilities to deal with them at Sharm El-Sheikh," Moussa retorted.

On the eve of the summit's opening, Egypt became involved in a dispute with Israel over the order of priorities of the conference: saving the peace process or fighting terrorism

Moussa, also speaking to reporters in Sharm El-Sheikh, said that "participants in the summit will do their utmost within the framework of three points: promoting peace, preserving security and combating violence." Placing the emphasis on re-activating the peace process, Moussa added: "Strengthening the peace process, at this particular time, is the target because there are difficulties on the Palestinian-Israeli track that must be addressed."

Moussa replied with a terse "of course," when asked whether the summit would urge the participants to provide aid and assistance to

The leftist Tagammu Party declared support for the summit on one condition — that it should act to promote a just and comprehensive peace in the region. This means, said the party's Secretary-General, Rifaat El-Said, that the blockade and punishments imposed on the Palestinians are lifted and pending problems, such as Jerusalem and the Golan, are solved.

and Lebanon and that its work will be confined to supporting Israel's security and undermining all the Arab liberation movements," said the party's Secretary-General Adel Hussein.

## Perfume for Clinton, T-shirts for Chirac

Accompanied by a few security guards and French diplomats, Chirac entered a store selling T-shirts and other beach ware. He acted like any ordinary tourist, asking questions about the material and where it came from.

customers at the shop were very excited that the French president was enjoying his time with them. Meanwhile, the shop owner showed Chirac different kinds of traditional incense as their sweet-smelling aroma filled the air.

The two men who also had to serve food for world dig-

nitarities who had arrived early in the week, commented that for the most part, the heads of state ate light meals. "On Tuesday night, they all had little light food. President Mubarak, who ate relatively early, had a small portion of mixed seafood. French President Jacques Chirac, who had a late dinner, ate some mixed cheeses and fruits. And Palestinian President Yasser Arafat also had a late dinner of mixed salads, cheese and fruits." After the Wednesday lunch proved to be a success, both men sat down and had a nice meal in their own kitchen to celebrate their mission accomplished.

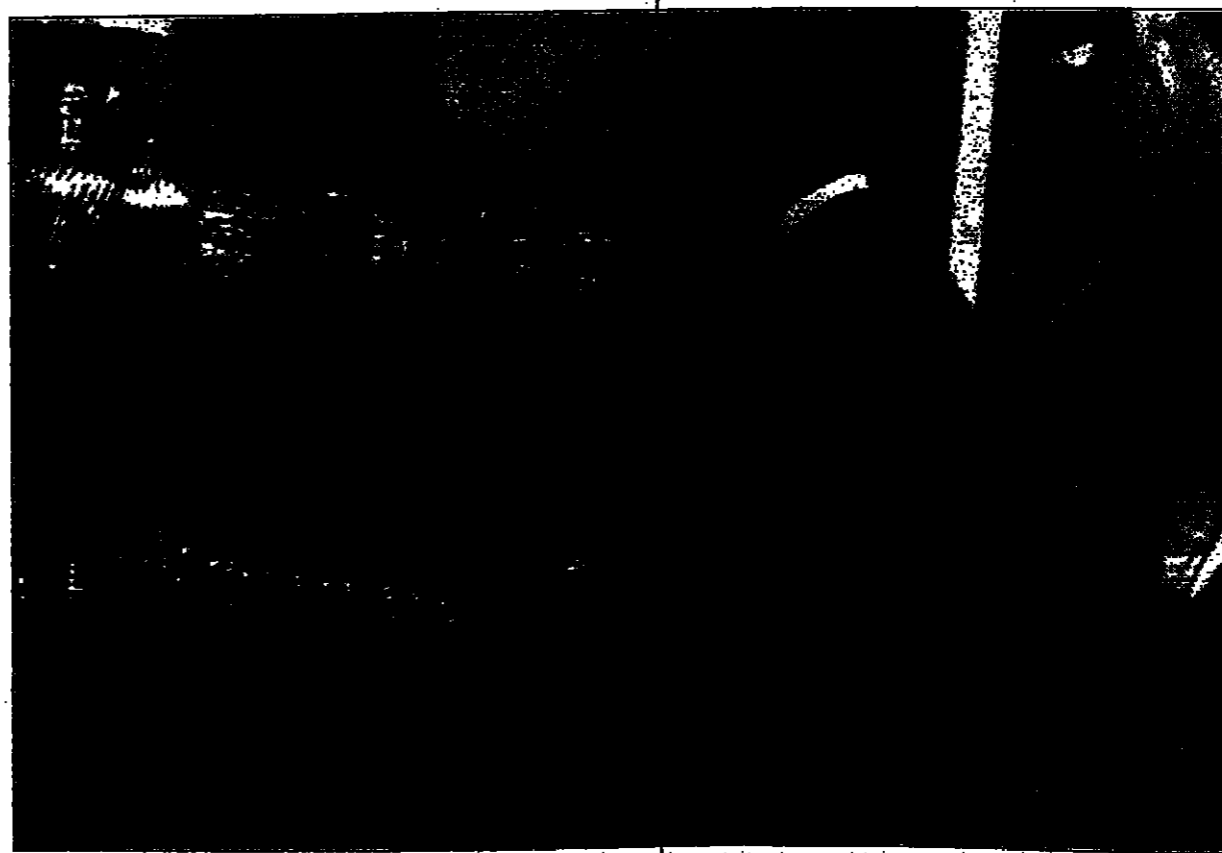
**Dr. kamal Abu El-Eid,**  
*chairman of the board of the*  
**Industrial Development Bank Of Egypt,**  
*its employees and clients*

God brought us peace: why should we declare war against ourselves?

**Mohamed Hosni Mubarak,**  
the Egyptian people and world leaders  
participating in the conference to  
stand against terrorism.

Although Sharm has limited facilities to accommodate such a mega conference, Maj. Gen. Shebl El-Baroudi, chairman of the city's council, said: "We worked and are working very hard to make everything ready." Throughout the three days that preceded the summit's opening, preparations continued at hectic speed to make sure that the city's infrastructure, streets, hotels and business centres would rise to the occasion. All the city's hotels were booked out as of last Saturday.

And workers in the tourism industry were really upbeat. "If we had spent millions of pounds to promote Sharm El-Sheikh to the world as a tourist destination, we would not have got as much publicity. Sharm El-Sheikh is simply on every news channel worldwide," said Maged El-Essawi, manager of a local tourism service.



**President Bill Clinton goes window shopping while touring Sharm El-Sheikh before attending the summit (photo: AFP)**

هذه من الأصل



In Jerusalem's old city, Israeli soldiers guard a detained Palestinian woman from Gaza for illegal entry into Israel (photo: AFP)

## Tough times for Arafat

The Palestinians did not have enough bargaining chips at the Peacemakers Summit, writes **Dina Ezzat** from Sharm El-Sheikh

Arriving at the Movenpick hotel in Sharm El-Sheikh for the Peacemakers Summit, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat looked distinctly depressed. His grim expression and the bewildered look in his eyes were reminiscent of pictures of his escape from Beirut in 1982, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

"Indeed, he is escaping. It's not an easy situation he has to deal with," said a Western source who asked his name to be withheld. "He will have to make serious concessions. The Israelis want it, the Americans support it, and Egypt failed to get the Europeans to minimise them."

"Arafat refused to speak, or even look, at the scores of reporters gathered to hear his comments on his talk with Mubarak or his expectations for the summit."

Arriving at Sharm El-Sheikh airport on Tuesday afternoon, Arafat's only comment was that "we are here to support peace and make sure that what was agreed and signed on will be implemented."

And after a brief meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez on Tuesday night, Arafat still seemed to be having a tough time. "This is a very important chance for all of us to push the peace process," said the fighter-turned-peacemaker, adding that: "The Palestinians

(in the self-rule territories) should not be punished with this [Israeli imposed] embargo, starvation and terrorism."

"From the beginning, it was expected that this summit would be a podium for the Palestinians to declare that they were going to make some concessions to the Israelis," a source, from an influential Western state, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* on condition of anonymity.

"This summit is basically to help resume the peace process and not to destroy what has been achieved already," stressed Patrick Leclercq, the French ambassador to Egypt. "And the fact is that Israel will find it very difficult to go ahead with the peace process with the way things have been."

Egypt maintained that, while the summit was about the whole Middle East peace process, it was actually going to focus on the Palestinian-Israeli track. "This is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict," commented Minister of Foreign Affairs Amr Moussa. Moussa promised that all kinds of technical help would be provided for Arafat to combat terrorism.

But according to participating Western diplomats, what Arafat had to agree on in this summit was much more than accepting anti-terrorism technical aid or even being party to a strongly-worded final resolution

condemning all militant Palestinian factions.

There is a definite belief on the Israeli side that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has failed to do all it could to combat terrorism. According to David Sultan, the Israeli ambassador to Egypt, "The core of this conference is to fight terrorism and the enemies of peace." By Sultan's definition, the enemies of peace include all the militant Palestinian factions.

Sultan insisted that Israeli opposition represents a far lesser threat to the peace process. He categorically rejected the suggestion, attributed to Arafat, that Israeli extremists were linked to the four suicide bombings earlier this month. "Everything is well known. We know exactly who was behind those bombings, who did them, and how they happened," Sultan asserted. He added: "We came to this summit with one main expectation; namely to get the Palestinians to commit themselves to take some serious measures to combat terrorism." He refused to define what he meant by "serious measures."

According to various sources, the inevitable result of these measures will be to undermine the authority of the PNA. "What we are talking about is a more obvious show of the Israeli power and control," said one

source, who predicted the re-deployment of Israeli forces in Gaza and Jericho.

Palestinian bargaining power is further lessened by the obvious split in Arab opinion about how much the Palestinians should concede for the sake of peace.

For his part, Foreign Affairs Minister Moussa assured that whatever was said about the split within the Arab world, "there is always a basic minimum that all Arabs agree on." According to an informed source, the Arabs will maintain that if Arafat is forced to sacrifice a portion of what

little authority he has, then donors will have to speed up the channelling of aid to the self-rule territories.

But even this cannot be taken for granted. "The Palestinians will have to come up with projects for the donors to channel the money to," said French Ambassador Leclercq.

Participants in the Sharm El-Sheikh summit agreed that Arafat has been struck by what is, at best, a patch of very bad luck. With both the Israeli elections and the US presidential elections scheduled for later this year, there was no way that either country

will let the recent series of anti-Israeli bombings go unpunished.

A senior member of the Palestinian delegation acknowledged on Wednesday morning that the summit's results were unlikely to do justice to the Palestinians. But then, as he noted with a tone of understandable resignation, "Life is never fair."

The only kernel of hope expressed by some observers was that the punitive measures against Arafat would not be too harsh for him to cope with.

## Plea for help

PALESTINIAN Minister for International Cooperation Nabil Shaath yesterday called on the United States to provide the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with the means to fight terrorism. Shaath also charged that militant Islamist groups such as Hamas were getting funds, explosives and support from groups in the US.

"All the countries participating here should carefully check their sources of financing and support to the terrorists," he told reporters yesterday before world leaders opened the unprecedented Peacemakers Summit at Sharm El-Sheikh, aimed at countering terrorism and salvaging the Middle East peace process.

"They should cooperate in giving us the means and the support through which we can do our job," Shaath said. He criticised the US for asking Palestinians to arrest terrorists while it "is giving all the equipment to Israel. The money that comes to Hamas comes from money transferred through American banks and Israeli banks."

Shaath noted that countries such as Iran, which has been directly implicated by the US and Israel of involvement in the four recent suicide bombings in Israel, were not the only problem. "Other countries should be taken to task," he said.

However, Shaath stressed that "the issue here was not only fighting terrorism but getting the political process going. You cannot fight terror only by security measures; you fight terror by political measures, by political hopes and aspirations and by economic measures."

He warned that economic hardship breeds "hungry people who may be recruited to become suicide bombers because they think life is not worth living, and therefore you have to give people real economic and political changes together with security measures." Four Palestinians have died as a result of the blockade imposed by Israel since 25 February, which led to severe shortages of food and medicine.

"I have never seen any closure in my life against one who is supposedly a partner in the peace process," said Shaath.

## Congress bashes PNA

PRESIDENT Arafat's clampdown on Islamist militants in the wake of the recent bombings in Israel has failed to convince members of a US Congressional panel of his determination to root out extremism. The House International Relations Committee dismissed a generally positive report by the Clinton administration and accused the PLO of "tacit approval" of anti-Israeli terrorism.

Reflecting new alliances in the region, Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East Robert Pelletreau, championed the efforts taken so far by the Palestinian leadership, saying that they had demonstrated a readiness to take on Hamas militants. Pelletreau said that Arafat and his administration had outlawed the military wings of extremist Islamic movements and arrested some 700 activists, including up to seven of the 13 top suspects on a list provided by Israel.

"Most importantly, they have begun to move against the senior leadership and military infrastructure of Hamas," he said.

It was not enough to convince hardline Democrat and Republican congressional members, who accused the US State Department of "whitewashing" President Arafat.

Arafat's "double-tongued statements have helped to support an environment in which terrorist organisations flourish and recruit because they are led to believe they have the tacit approval of the Palestinian leadership," said Republican Representative Benjamin Gilman, who heads the panel.

Vying to match Republican rhetoric, Democratic Representative Tom Lantos accused Arafat of allegedly orchestrating a "charade" by temporarily detaining some terrorists and setting them free a few

weeks later.

At stake is \$500 million in US assistance to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). In order for the money to be released President Clinton has to report to Congress that the PLO is complying with the terms of the September 1993 peace agreement. The committee has already blocked payment of a \$13 million instalment.

Tightening the financial noose around the PNA's neck could be counterproductive. While agreeing that the PLO could have done more to implement a sustained campaign against terrorist groups, Pelletreau warned: "Cutting off aid... would weaken the ability of the Palestinian authorities to manage the areas under their jurisdiction." It would "also hamper their ability to fight terror and show the Palestinian people the benefits of peace at this critical moment in the Middle East."

## Hamas claims self-defence

DEPENDING its position regarding the recent suicide operations in Israel in a six-page printed letter addressed to world leaders participating in the Peacemakers Summit at Sharm El-Sheikh, Hamas said that the attacks were "acts of self-defence."

"The reason why our military wing hits Israeli targets is the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian land," the letter said. "The movement also said in its letter that it 'was ready for international mediation to halt its offensive'."

Received by AFP in Amman, the letter outlined Hamas' detailed strategy in its struggle against Israel. It also restated Hamas' earlier offer for a ceasefire rejected by Israel. "We urge you to pressure Israel into responding to wise calls and react positively to our previous

initiatives," the letter said. "We welcome any mediation you would initiate."

"Any pro-Israeli international measures against Hamas will not solve the problem but will increase Israeli terrorism and barbarism," it added.

Hamas called on world leaders at the summit to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied Palestinian land. "Palestinian mujahideen (freedom fighters) are eager to pursue the confrontation with Israel unless the international community puts an end to Israeli terrorism."

The movement claimed that its "political and struggle-oriented programme is more eligible for ending Israel's occupation than the weak self-rule project."

## Appeals for human rights

AMNESTY International urged world leaders attending the unprecedented Peacemakers Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh not to sacrifice human rights in the name of fighting terrorism.

"We call on the participants of the summit to recognise that human rights must not be sacrificed in the name of security. On the contrary, sustained peace and security can only be obtained by implementing human rights," the group said in a statement issued on Tuesday.

"There is a grave danger that human rights violations may be condoned by the international community in the name of fighting terrorism," the statement said. The international human rights organisation recognised that a large number of civilians in Israel and the Palestinian territories had been killed by armed opposition groups. "To combat these groups thousands of suspected government opponents have been rounded up, and torture is systematic," it added.

US-based Human Rights Watch launched a similar appeal, urging participants to "signal their clear adherence to international human rights principles as they address the problem of terrorism and political violence". It said "collective punishment" such as the destruction of homes of suspected terrorists — which Israel implemented in several West Bank villages following the recent suicide bombings — contravened international human rights standards.

## Roadblock killing

STILLBORN twins became the latest victims of the Israeli blockade of Palestinian areas when soldiers prevented their mother from reaching hospital for delivery, Palestinian officials said Tuesday.

The baby boy and girl were stillborn at an Israeli checkpoint after soldiers prevented Hanan Salem Zayed, 25, from travelling from her West Bank village to a Bethlehem hospital.

The incident brought to four the number of Palestinians whose deaths were attributed to the blockade imposed by Israel after a wave of Islamist suicide bombings which killed 61 people in Israel since 25 February.

"It's terrorism, worse than the attack at Dizengoff," charged Zayed's sister-in-law, Samira Al-Jarachi, referring to the 4 March suicide bombing in Tel Aviv which killed 13 people.

At the Gaza City headquarters of the Palestinian Authority, acting Health Minister Ryad Zaanun angrily denounced the Israeli action. "The soldiers made them wait for hours and this caused complications — the woman needed emergency surgery to give birth," said Zaanun, himself a medical doctor.

An Israeli army spokesman declined comment.

# EGYPT AIR

Welcomes guests participating

in the

## Peace Makers Summit

Today we all stand together to

renew our support for the

peace process, condemning

terrorism in all forms,

under the leadership of President

## Mohamed Hosni Mubarak,

for the welfare and security

of all mankind

## Washington

# Clinton declares war on 'terrorism'

Clinton's presence at the summit amounts to a rescue mission for both the peace process and Shimon Peres. **Hoda Tewfik** reports on the mood in Washington

President Bill Clinton's decision to co-sponsor the Sharm El-Sheikh summit with President Hosni Mubarak, and to attend it personally, is viewed in Washington as a rescue mission for both the peace process and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

But the approaches to the rescue have varied. Clinton, and also Peres, wanted a clear statement denouncing terrorism and announcing well-defined measures for an all-out war against Hamas and other militant organisations. But Egypt and other Arab states, both of whom came to the summit and those who stayed behind, gave priority to re-activating the peace process.

A Washington-based Middle East expert warned that if Israel, backed by the US, was given a free hand to strike back at the Palestinians, the peace process would amount to nothing more than a dictation of Israel's terms to the Arabs. But for Clinton the defeat of "the terrorists" is an absolute necessity. "We must not let the terrorists in the Middle East have the victory they seek. The solidarity of peacekeepers in this world today must be stronger than bullets or bombs," he said.

What Clinton sought by co-sponsoring the conference, according to Antony Lake, his national security advisor, was a strong demonstration of the international community's support for the Middle East peace process and specific ideas on how this community could further the war against terrorism, according to his national security advisor.

The Clinton administration not only urged Arafat to cooperate with Israeli security authorities in the clampdown on Hamas, but also

pressed both sides to share information. Following the bombings in Israel, George Tenet, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, visited Israel and the self-rule areas to determine how the Americans could help the two sides in the war against terrorism. "Arafat has no alternative but to crack down on Hamas. It is a matter of life and death for him," a Clinton administration official commented.

In the view of administration officials, Arafat's Palestinian Authority has been placed under probation, both in Israel and America. "We would like to see very stern justice for those that are responsible as chairman Arafat rounds them up," Lake said, stressing that continued pressure would be put on Arafat to do more.

Lake described the Sharm El-Sheikh summit as an "extraordinary meeting for two reasons: first of all, the participation of leaders at a higher level, including more leaders from the Arab world, coming together not at a moment of triumph and celebration of progress in peace — as we saw on the south lawn and in celebrating the Jordanian-Israeli peace — but at a moment of very dark difficulty, at a hard time. And secondly, it is a much higher and broader level than we've ever seen before."

Clinton's aim, first of all, was to send a message to the people and government of Israel that they are not alone, that the world is standing with them at a time like this, Lake said. And secondly to re-dedicate "all of us" to fighting terrorism, which, he added, would lead to some very specific measures. At the same time, Clinton is pressing the donor countries to fulfill their economic obligations to the Palestinian Authority.

Administration officials believe that the spotlight on Clinton at Sharm El-Sheikh will not only help the peace process and the fight against terrorism but will also boost his image back home at a time when the presidential election is turning into a two-horse race, Clinton versus Bob Dole.

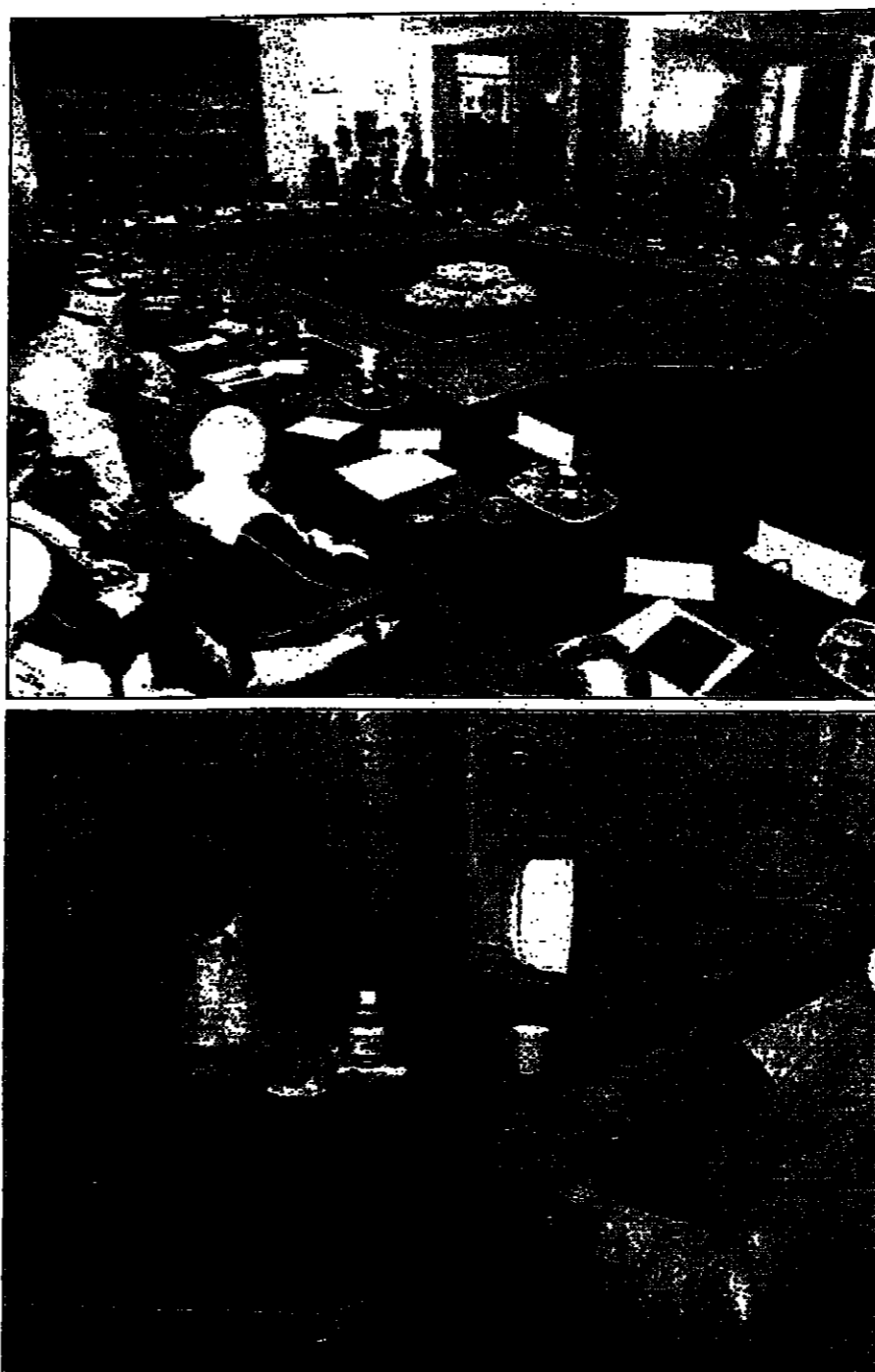
In Israel, Peres is also fighting for his future as the 29 May parliamentary elections approach. And he has the full backing of the Clinton administration.

Meanwhile, both states have recently praised Arafat for his vigour in cracking down on militants, but said they would keep a watchful eye to make sure that his efforts did not slacken off.

"There was a time when I believed Arafat thought he might be able to deal with Hamas by dialogue. That turns out to have been a mistake," said Secretary of State Warren Christopher. "Now he needs to take the other track. This conference can firm him up in the decision to move aggressively against the military wing of Hamas."

Christopher's spokesman was more blunt when he commented: "There is no distinction between political and military leaders." Nicholas Burns added: "It is hard for me to see how a leading member of Hamas could avoid responsibility for the actions of Hamas by saying 'Oh I'm just part of the political wing. I am not part of the military wing.'"

In the view of many observers, the Palestinians are the losers, even if the peace process is revived. As one analyst put it: "under the Israeli occupation they suffered terror and now they are being terrorised in peace."



General view of the summit (above), President Clinton and King Hussein chat with the press aboard Air Force One, on their way to attend the summit (below) photo: AFP

## On peace and terrorism

By Azmy Bishara

Applying the concepts of failure and success to the ongoing Arab-Israeli peace process implies that the process has an independent history, or historical subjectivity, separate from the events of the past century. It suggests that the process does not involve Palestinians, Israelis and the structures that have grown up around them.

Against this historical subject, which has rationality and moderation among its positive attributes, another historical subject exists. The only link between the two is the latter's absolute rejection of the former. The second represents absolute evil and the first absolute good; the second can, therefore, only be self-seeking and bring disaster, bitterness, and disillusionment.

I am not denying the historical facts. Indeed, no one can deny their existence. But the intention here is to draw attention to the fact that there are losers and winners in any process. And as there is no room to list all the losers, I will only refer to a few.

The oasis lies with sensible elements on both sides to deal with the issues at hand. It is irrespective of the success or failure of the peace process and regardless of the differing political positions surrounding it. Conflicting positions will not change the facts created by the peace process. And matters have reached a stage where it is imperative to deal with these facts.

The local and international forces governing the Oslo agreements are more powerful than those prevalent during the Camp David accord. The wave of suicide bombings executed by Hamas will not change this fact, but they have undoubtedly raised the price Israel will pay. Nevertheless, the existing balance of power and the relationship between the patronage relation Israel has with the Palestinian Authority will only further tighten the noose around Palestinians' necks.

The Palestinian opposition to the peace process, which confuses ideology with judgments on what is sinful and what is not, committed a serious error by boycotting the elections. This opposition has in fact rejected reality as well as politics. Thus, the latest Hamas operations are seen as falling outside political activities, particularly since supporters of the peace process now claim to be the sole political representatives. For them, there are no politics outside the peace process now — just terrorism.

Undoubtedly, the suicide operations of Ezzeddin Al-Qassam, Hamas's military wing, must be strongly opposed, whether they constitute an obstacle to the peace process or not. Nor should they be condemned merely for their incompatibility with any genuine political opposition to the peace process. They should be condemned, first and foremost, on moral grounds. There is no link between the struggle for liberation and the killing of innocent people in buses and market places. Furthermore, it is a matter of great concern for the future of Palestinian society that it has youth ready to commit suicide in return for the death of a maximum number of Israelis, irrespective of the nature of the political solution reached.

We do not expect Israel to suddenly acquire an understanding of the background surrounding these political, economic and social processes, and give the Palestinians their freedom and rights. Nevertheless, we expect Israel to understand that we are faced with a new phenomenon that baffles even those of us who claim a deep understanding of Palestinian conditions.

This emerging phenomenon cannot be dealt with by imposing tougher collective restrictions. It was this very same collective punishment that has produced such a great number of Palestinian youths who are willing to die for the sake of revenge.

I find it impossible to believe that anyone would voluntarily use his body as an explosive simply to undermine the peace process or to bring down Peres. I also refuse to believe that Iran can convince a Palestinian youth from the Fawar refugee camp to commit suicide for the sake of shedding Israeli blood. I do understand, however, how persistent and overwhelming humiliation, oppression and degradation can ride life of all purpose save that of revenge. Do the confiscation of land, the demolition of houses, border closures and the restriction of movement have either meaning or consequence apart from leading to the further escalation of violence? Enforcing tough restrictions on the suicide bomber and his family will not stop suicide bombings. For what can be a tougher penalty than death?

As for the Likud Party, it can only boast of its ability to come up with solutions that would fuel the situation further. After all, Likud does not have an alternative army, police or intelligence network. Those looking for ways and means to put a stop to the suicide operations must ask questions about the particular nature of these operations. The solution does not lie with the victims, for every victim is an individual and every pain has its specific nature. Instead, we should closely examine the actors, look carefully into their life histories, rather than talk about terrorism in abstract terms.

I have not discussed the structureless political situation called the interim settlement, nor the Palestinians' deteriorating economic conditions, nor the expansion of Jewish settlements and the further confiscation of land. If we think along these lines, we will discover that there are many losers. If we are searching for a solution that would cut down on the number of victims, without resorting to claims that the Arabs are backward and Islam is barbaric, then we must consider specifically the loss of the Hamas fighters who languished in prison even after a settlement was brokered.

Israel has continued to pursue and eliminate Hamas activists, even in the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority, without giving them the benefit of a trial — flouting what it has deemed the most important principle of the peace agreement, that of the redistribution of security responsibilities. Death is now the inevitable fate of Hamas' wanted militants. Their fate is equated with suicide. And certain death has found an echo in the suicidal desire for revenge.

More pragmatism requires that we find a solution to rescue the hunted Hamas fighters from this dialectic of death, instead of reciting empty words on peace and terrorism.

During the week of the suicide bombings, an Israeli television anchor asked why opinion polls on the popularity of Labour, Likud and the peace process do not include the following question: Do you still support the killing of Yehia Ayyash?

The writer is a professor of philosophy at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank and member of the board of the Ramallah-based Mawtin Institute for the Study of Democracy.

## Jerusalem

The massive show of international support for Peres and the peace process is designed to breathe life into the ailing Oslo agreements. Meanwhile, the Palestinians continue to suffer, writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem, looking also at the CIA connection.

## Counting the Palestinian casualties

While the leaders of 31 nations converge on the Egyptian resort of Sharm El-Sheikh for the "summit of peacekeepers", Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are chafing under a raft of Israeli collective punishment measures unprecedented since the dark days of the 1991 Gulf War.

In the week following the Hamas inspired suicide operations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Palestinians in the West Bank have witnessed upwards of 1,000 "Islamist suspects" arrested by Israeli troops, both in the West Bank's "Area C" zones where Israel enjoys de facto sovereignty and "Area B" zones where the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) nominally has civic control. Around a dozen Islamist welfare and educational institutions have been closed "as greenhouses for terrorists" in Hebron and Jerusalem and in villages surrounding Jenin and Ramallah. Nine homes belonging to suicide bombers' families past and present have been sealed and (pending such "formalities" as the families right to legal appeal) "will be demolished without mercy," says the "new Middle East" visionary, Shimon Peres.

But the most draconian measure has been Israel's "internal closure" of the West Bank and Gaza. This has tipped the already precarious Palestinian economy into freefall, since Palestinians are now not only confined to the Occupied Territories but also to their villages and towns inside the West Bank. The result, says leader of Palestinian Trade Unions in Ramallah, Hassan Sharaka, is a de facto unemployment rate of 78 per cent throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. PNA health officials say that 245 clinics have stopped functioning in the West Bank and Gaza Strip due to a lack of medical supplies or the inability of staff reaching their workplaces. At least four Palestinians have died due to ambulances being turned back at Israeli army checkpoints, including a 21 year old girl who died from entirely treatable respiratory ailments.

It is under such circumstances that Palestinians view the summit, with opinions as to

its utility coloured by politics. For Hamas' military arm, Ezzeddin Al-Qassam, the summit is simply "an international conspiracy against the struggle of the people and an attempt to save the Zionists from defeat." But most Palestinians see in the summit a chance to ease the war that Israel is currently waging against them. "We call on the international community and leaders... who will meet in Sharm El-Sheikh... to intervene to lift the economic siege imposed on the Palestinians," ran a statement signed by both PNA ministers and an array of Palestinian NGOs on 11 March.

At the inaugural session of the Palestinian legislative council in Gaza on 7 March, the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, lent his support to the summit, calling for "a meeting at the highest level between all nations... to confront violence and terror and uphold them." One motive behind the call is Arafat's desire to end the closure. But he has others.

In the last week, the PNA in Gaza has launched a massive onslaught against its Islamist opposition, arresting over 700 Palestinians (including front-line Hamas leaders like Mahmoud Zahar and Sayed Abu Musab), taking over mosques and raiding around thirty Islamist institutions. In such circumstances, Arafat needs to marshal the widest possible coalition of international and, above all, Arab states to give legitimacy to these measures. He also needs the summit to keep some mutant of the Oslo agreements alive, which, in his eyes, boils down to doing everything possible to ensure Shimon Peres is re-elected Israeli prime minister.

And this, for most Palestinians and Israelis, is the summit's real subtext, no matter what "joint communiqué" issues from it. Such a massive show of international solidarity for Peres and the Oslo peace process can only bolster the Israeli prime minister's flagging electoral fortunes, with recent polls showing him running neck and neck with his main rival, Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu. The very genealogy of the summit idea supports this.

Sources say Peres broached the idea of a summit in a phone call to President Clinton immediately after the Tel Aviv bombing on 4 March. Four days later, Clinton floated the idea publicly in a White House statement. By 9 March, the content and venue of the summit had been decided, mainly through the mediation of Peres, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Egypt's President, Hosni Mubarak.

Given this background, it is understandable that the Likud-led opposition is less than enthusiastic about the summit. Netanyahu welcomed the conference "in principle", but wants "an opposition presence" at it. He is unlikely to get anything other than minor billing. Privately (and not so privately), however, Likud is furious, since the summit has already blunted their attacks on Peres. Likud faction leader, Moshe Katzav, suggested caustically that the Israeli prime minister "send his election campaign advisor" to Clinton to ensure the maximum media coverage of the event. Likud Knesset member, Benny Begin, was blunter still. The summit is merely a desperate attempt to "cover up the great failure of Oslo", he said.

But Netanyahu cannot publicly criticise the summit. As the self-styled Israeli expert on "terrorism", he can hardly be against the emergence of an "anti-terror" coalition in the region which — unlike the anti-Israel coalition in 1991 — places Israel at its very centre. On the other hand, he cannot champion it too strongly, since this is indirectly to admit that Peres and Oslo have indeed fundamentally altered the geopolitics of the Middle East.

Such calculations, however, are a million miles from the thoughts of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As each day of closure passes, the problem for them is less "terror and violence" than their causes — chief among them is Israel's ongoing occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, South Lebanon and the Golan Heights. But it is near certainty that this summit — germinated by Peres and delivered by Clinton — will barely raise the matter, let alone address it.

Increased US involvement in the Oslo peace process has not just been confined to diplomatic moves to mobilise maximum international support for the summit in Sharm El-Sheikh. The suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv have also triggered heightened levels of security collaboration between the US, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

On 5 March, President Clinton authorised the dispatch of eight bomb detection devices to Israel, costing around \$100 million. The transfer of equipment had been on the table for several months, but was delayed due to Israeli/US wrangles over payment. After the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv attacks, the US decided to pay for the equipment itself. "Thank you, friend," said Israeli Internal Security Minister, Moshe Shaleh, when the first shipment arrived at Ben Gurion airport on 6 March.

The US also pledged to send its own "anti-terrorism experts" to assemble a "comprehensive package of training, technical assistance and equipment" to Israel and improve security coordination between Israel, the PNA and "others" in the region.

The first fruit of this was an unprecedented meeting in Gaza on 9 March between PLO leader Yasser Arafat, PNA security officials and CIA security personnel, including the Agency's deputy director, George Tenet. Sources say Tenet demanded the PNA arrest five key activists of Ezzeddin Al-Qassam, the military wing of Hamas, whom the US and Israel believe were behind the recent spate of bombings. Arafat requested that the CIA "help" the PNA police with training in "counter-terrorism techniques" such as the use of sniffer dogs, detecting explosives and funds.

Arafat has at least partially paid his side of the bargain. On 10 March, the PNA announced it had arrested three of the five Qassam fugitives in Gaza's Khan Younis area, including Qassam's "deputy leader" in the Strip, Abdel-Fatih Satri. "I think Arafat has shown a real readiness to arrest the group" responsible for the suicide operations, said Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, on news of the arrests. "He has arrested three of the six most important (Hamas) persons," he added.

The US, too, was pleased with Arafat's compliance. "There has to be very good intelligence gathered by and shared with the Israeli authorities and the PNA," said US State Department "coordinator" for counter-terrorism, Phillip Wilcox Jr. "A great deal is being done, but this is an area where you can do more," he added.

All these negative developments have fuelled the apprehensions of the Palestinians as well as their hope that the summit would not only address Israel's security concerns, but also their political and national aspirations. In this connection, the Palestinians have looked to Egypt for assistance.

In the view of PLO activist and writer Hassan Al-Batal, regional peace should be based on justice "and only then will the summit mark the beginning of bringing terrorism to an end. The other side is asking us (Palestinians) to spearhead the campaign against terrorism, under the threat of collective punishments and blockade, that serves their interests. But the summit should come up with the means of a preventive war against terrorism, and not an after-the-event war," Al-Batal said on the eve of the summit.

Samih Shabih, a Palestinian writer, said the summit was a "golden opportunity to promote the prospects of peace. But this requires that the policy of threats and punishments be replaced by direct negotiations that would create an appropriate climate for the political survival of the Palestinian Authority as an effective force in the peace-making process."

## Gaza

## Wanted: a climate for survival

Palestinians, warning against a 'security for peace' formula, hoped the summit would not only address Israel's security concerns, but also come up with solutions to their political and economic plights. **Tarek Hassan** reports from Gaza

Yasser Abd-Rabbou, Minister of Culture and Information in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), believes that Palestinian-Israeli violence is a "symptom of a political malaise". The cure which he and the PNA recommend is strict Israeli adherence to agreements between the two sides as well as the opening on schedule of negotiations on the final status of the Occupied Territories. These negotiations were due to open in May, but the Israelis want them delayed because they coincide with parliamentary elections that will be held at the end of the same month.

The PNA also believes that the continued Israeli blockade of the self-rule areas and the policy of impoverishing the Palestinians are destabilising factors. "The summit would have been at the expense of the Palestinians, if it only comes up with solutions to security problems and not political solutions," a Palestinian source said two days before the conference.

Abd-Rabbou authored a Palestinian paper for presentation to the summit after it won the seal of approval from the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). The paper focused on three points: — the problem of terrorism should not be addressed from a technical perspective only, which would mean that an international security alliance

is being established; rather, the summit should work for setting up a political alliance that addresses the causes and roots of the problem, and not only its manifestations;

— the continued occupation and Israel's failure to honour the agreements between the two sides provide the appropriate climate for the proliferation of acts of violence; consequently agreements should be honoured and the final-status negotiations should open to produce political results that will provide basic solutions and convince all Palestinians of the advantages of peace;

— solving the economic problems of the Palestinians is a basic necessity; the continued Israeli blockade, impoverishment and all other collective acts of punishment will cause counter-violence to grow and not recede.

If peace for the Israelis means security, for the Palestinians it means the achievement of a minimum of their national aspirations and the improvement of their living conditions. Nearly three years after Oslo, neither side has gained what it was looking for. The Palestinians were worried that the summit might bolster Israel's attempt to sanction the formula of "security in return for peace". The indications of the past few days were not re-assuring.

For one thing, the Israeli army has re-imposed

total security control inside the villages of the West Bank and re-introduced the policy of collective punishments, including the demolition of houses, massive arrests and threats of deportation. These villages, which make up about 70 per cent of the total area of the West Bank, are classified in the Oslo agreement as Zone B. The presence of Palestinian police is allowed inside this zone, although it remains under the control of Israeli security authorities.

The Palestinians were hoping that a second redeployment of Israeli forces would cover the villages of Zone B at a later stage. But these hopes might have been dashed by the latest Israeli security measures.

In advance of the final-status negotiations, which will cover Jerusalem, Israel has used the bombings to settle the dispute over the future of the holy city in its favour. Several Palestinian establishments have been shut down, under the pretext that they are run by Hamas; activities of the PLO's Orient House are suspended; and an Israeli police station has been opened in East Jerusalem.

The imposition of the blockade on all Palestinian territories underlines the bitter truth that the situation on the ground is determined by the balance of forces, and not political agreements. In other words, Israel has the power to promote or

peace  
terrorism

## A cry for more blood

By Tikva Honig-Parnass

The recent suicide bombings carried out by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in Jerusalem, Ashkelon and Tel Aviv have led to a public reaction in Israel which endangers the continuation of the Oslo peace process and obviously the prospects of Shimon Peres and the Labour Party winning the upcoming elections scheduled for 29 May.

In the wake of the Israeli public's loss of the sense of personal security, there is a chorus shouting itself hoarse calling for revenge. Demands for indiscriminate destruction, deportations and the demolition of the houses of Hamas members, as well as those of their supporters, relatives and even entire villages in which they live, are growing louder and louder. On 6 March Israeli President Ezer Weizman declared, "When you are looking for a needle in a haystack, and you cannot find the needle you must burn the whole haystack." The Israeli writer S. Yizhar, identified with the Zionist labour movement and known "as a humanist and conscience of the people", wrote that the Palestinian people are "cannibals" who should be excluded from the category of human beings. He thus provided his seal of approval for the collective punishments of the border closure and the military siege of 465 villages, and relieved Israel from observing any moral limits in its planned war against Hamas.

Israel's portion of responsibility for the operations of the Islamic resistance must, however, be understood, if we are to be able to properly estimate the risk of war, which is currently being spurred on by the broad coalition led by the United States and including West European countries, several Arab regimes, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) as well.

The government of Israel bears responsibility for the recent suicide bombings not only because its continued occupation, with starvation tactics and other violations of basic human rights, provides the soil for the growth of desperate acts on the part of Palestinian youths. The government is responsible in a much more immediate fashion: for months Israel has rejected all overtures by Hamas to participate in the peace process.

Israel also rebuffed the proposals transmitted by Hamas in the course of its negotiations with the PNA for a cessation of its military operations in return for a cessation of the persecution of its activists and the release of about 1,000 Palestinian prisoners identified with the Islamic resistance who are being held by Israel. These overtures did not cease even after Israel assassinated Islamic Jihad leader Pathi Shakkari in Malta and Hamas activist Yehia Ayyash in the Gaza Strip, after six months of undeclared ceasefire. Israel deliberately sabotaged the policy of the PNA — whose aim was the integration of Hamas into the self-rule apparatus as a political party — by opposing Hamas participation in the autonomy council elections. Despite Israel's best efforts, the PNA's cooperation policy has enjoyed a measure of success, although none in the Gaza Strip than the West Bank.

The recent suicide operations of Hamas are an inevitable reaction to the government policy of pushing Hamas' back against the wall. Israel is not interested in the rise of a militant Palestinian political opposition — either Islamic or secular — which would seek to safeguard Palestinian national interests in the final-stage negotiations with Israel. Rather, it wants the PNA to crush Hamas in an all-out confrontation which would risk a bloody Palestinian civil war. The government knows that embarking on this course will deprive Arafat of all legitimacy in the eyes of his people.

Arafat has resisted this pressure until now. Even now, a week after the most recent suicide bombings, Arafat has refrained from the wholesale arrest of the military leadership of Hamas and from initiating a real war against its civil infrastructure.

Israel's "big brother", the US, hastened to intervene in order to quell the fires now burning in Palestine, which threaten to spread and endanger the new regional, and world order, of which the Oslo peace process is a part. The aim of the Sharm El-Sheikh conference, as far as the US is concerned, is to mobilise the West, together with the participating Arab states, in order to put pressure on Arafat to cooperate fully with Israel in the "total war" it has declared on the Islamic resistance. The participation of Arab states is also intended to lend legitimacy to such an endeavour.

Indeed, the US intended the Sharm El-Sheikh conference to promote its wider interests in the region through a declaration by Israel and the Arab states of a joint campaign not only against the Islamic resistance in Palestine, but against "Islamic fundamentalist terrorism" wherever it may be found, and against the Arab states which "support" it.

"Democratic critics of the Oslo Accords have long seen a danger on the horizon: the recognition and acceptance of the Jewish-Zionist state as a legitimate part of the Middle East before the realisation of the national rights of the Palestinian people. And if the US is to have its way, the prospect that faces us is not only the simple "recognition" of Israel, but rather its inclusion in an alliance directed against the Middle Eastern states that refuse to participate in the peace process. These dissenters include Iran and Libya, as well as Syria, which is still steadfast against US and Israeli demands, and political movements that are struggling against the process and against US imperialist hegemony in the Middle East.

The US-led coalition is now demanding that the Palestinians cooperate with those who support the plans for continued Israeli control over their lands, resources and lives. This so-called "volition" cannot but give birth to new suicide operations in the near future and will lead to terrible bloodshed for two peoples, the Palestinians and the Israelis, and jeopardise the peace and security of the entire Middle East.

The writer is the editor of *News From Within*, a monthly journal published by the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem.



Palestinians demonstrate against the current blockade, imposed by Israel following the recent suicide bus bombings, which has sent the Palestinian economy into freefall photo: Reuters

Beirut

## The right to resist

Lebanon boycotted yesterday's "summit of the peacemakers", arguing that the meeting would not be able to tackle the underlying reasons behind violence in the region. Instead, it considers the rhetoric on "terrorism" as an attempt to silence what it sees as legitimate resistance. Defence Minister Mohsen Dalloul said the summit would not distinguish between real terrorists and freedom fighters.

Foreign Minister Fares Boustayeh said discussions at the gathering would focus on issues pertaining to security and terrorism instead of the political problems. "The political problem is one that yields... and ends violence. Israeli occupation of Arab land is the main stumbling block to Middle East peace and the best way to solve the region's problems is to reconvene an international meeting based on the 1991 Madrid conference."

According to Farid Al-Khazen, a political science professor at the American University of Beirut, violence will not be eliminated after this conference nor any other summit. "The attacks will end once a regional settlement is reached between the concerned parties," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The US and Israel say the summit in Sharm El-Sheikh was aimed at combating terrorism and organising an international effort to deal with it. "This is why Lebanon (refused) to attend the summit. How can it partake in a meeting which (equated) terrorism with what it views as rightful resistance against occupation," Soleiman Takkiedine, a political analyst told the *Weekly*.

Takkiedine added that terrorist attacks are acts which do not have a cause. "The operations in Israel and the resistance attacks in south Lebanon

cannot be classified as terrorism. These people have a cause. They are fighting to liberate their land. What country or people did not resist occupation?" he asked. "The military attacks will not stop until the political questions are solved."

Lebanon and Syria, which have not signed peace treaties with Israel, argue that guerrilla attacks against Israeli forces occupying a 15km (nine-mile) wide strip in southern Lebanon are legitimate and rightful. Israel regards the resistance operations as terrorist attacks.

Hezbollah, which is spearheading the guerrilla war, said the summit would be a display "of arrogant American hegemony over our region and a consecration of Israeli control over it". It added that the war to oust Israeli troops from south Lebanon and suicide attacks by Palestinian groups in Israel were justified since they "target an enemy occupying the homeland".

The view is shared by the Islamic group Hamas which was responsible for the wave of suicide attacks in Israel that prompted the summit. Hamas' representative in Lebanon Mustapha Al-Liddawi told a news conference that the armed struggle will continue until the liberation of Arab land. "The struggle against Israel is legitimate. International law sanctions occupied people to resist," he said.

Meanwhile, pro-Syrian Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process called for a strike on Wednesday in the refugee camps in protest against the summit.

Observers believe Lebanon and Syria's boycott will not translate into a setback for the peace process since negotiations were already stalled before the bombings.

Amman

## Security agenda faces opposition

After making peace with Israel two years ago, King Hussein of Jordan has been outspoken against those who he sees as threatening the future of the current peace process.

In Washington last week, he said those responsible for the recent bombings in Israel "are trying to stop the peace process and destroy what has been achieved, and they must never succeed. We must do whatever we can to put an end to this. To combat this threat, said the king, required both regional and international efforts.

The first step was yesterday's peacemakers summit in Sharm El-Sheikh. In an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly* in Amman prior to the meeting, Crown Prince Hassan said that security issues are as vital as political concerns to the success of the current peace process.

"The present stage requires us not only to prepare politically for the post-peace era, but also to move simultaneously to prepare... ways to combat crime and the criminals who target the innocent, especially those who commit terrorist crimes."

In attending the meeting, it was therefore crucial for Jordan to have "clear and practical ideas on dealing with terrorism and a well-planned working paper reflecting Jordan's views and its determination to confront all forms of terrorism," Prince Hassan said.

There is no justification for acts of terrorism, he argued. "Acts of terrorism are crimes against humanity which are aimed at damaging our international reputation." Claims to martyrdom hold little sway with the regent. "Acts of terrorism conflict with our religious beliefs. Indeed, our culture and faith do not condone acts of suicide nor the killing of innocent people, be they Arabs or Israelis."

On the home front, Prime Minister Abdul-Karim Kabariti has warned that the Hashemite Kingdom will not hesitate in taking action against any organisation in the country that his government suspected of involvement in

Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan tells *Caroline Faraj* in Amman that cooperation in combating those who commit terrorist crimes is as vital to the peace process as political concerns. The opposition disagreed

terrorist activities in the region. On a regional level, he said that Jordan will cooperate with Israel and all concerned parties in every possible way to combat regional terrorism.

That willingness was demonstrated on Tuesday with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak arriving in Amman for talks with Prince Hassan. The flying visit was aimed at exchanging views and coordinating steps between the two countries prior to yesterday's summit. Israel's army radio said the two sides would also discuss an anti-terrorism agreement to be concluded soon. On his return to Jerusalem Barak praised Jordan's efforts to combat terrorism, saying that "this country fights terrorism efficiently, responsibly and methodically".

Jordan has also sent its emissaries abroad. On 4 March Jordan dispatched two senior ministers to the Gaza Strip with a message from King Hussein to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, reportedly to offer Jordan's help in countering the wave of militant violence that is threatening the current peace process.

Yet reaction on the streets of Amman is mixed. Mahmoud Jaber, a Jordanian businessman, expressed concern over Israel punishing two million Palestinians for the acts of a few. "Maintaining the collective punishment approach will strengthen the hardliners and weaken the pro-peace forces in the Palestinian society," he commented.

"It will weaken the Israelis' partner in

Damascus

## Madrid call

Syria, which shunned the summit, said a revival of the Madrid peace conference was the only way to save the faltering peace process

Syria, which turned down an invitation to attend the summit, called for a return to the principles of the 1991 Madrid peace conference as the only way to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

"Syria reaffirms its commitment to achieve the goals and principles of the Madrid conference and calls on the sponsors of the peace process to continue the work of this conference without delay," Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara said on Saturday.

Al-Shara sent messages to this effect to US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov. The United States, which co-sponsored the Madrid conference with Russia, also co-sponsored Sharm El-Sheikh, this time with President Hosni Mubarak. Russia was represented by President Boris Yeltsin.

The Arab-Israeli peace process "faces a difficult crisis because of obstacles caused by acts of violence which are impossible to resolve without convening another meeting [a sequel] to the Madrid conference," Al-Shara said.

He asked his US and Russian counterparts to work with the concerned parties to reach agreement "on the time and place for an eventual meeting of the conference to overcome the obstacles and to move peace efforts forward".

Although Syria has entered into peace talks with Israel, the country remains on the US State Department's list of countries which sponsor terrorism. So far, the Syrian-Israeli talks have made little progress.

The Syrian government-controlled press have taken the line that a distinction must be drawn between terrorism and acts of national liberation, and has rejected Israel's call on Syria to expel radical Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process.

"While preparations are under way for the summit in Sharm El-Sheikh on

terrorism, the Arab media and newspapers insist on the need not to confuse terrorist acts with the legitimate struggle against occupation," the newspaper *Al-Thawra* said on Sunday. It warned against "ignoring Israeli terrorism, which is the principal cause of the violence," adding that "Middle East peace is not possible as long as Israel continues to occupy Arab land."

And on Monday *Tishrin* said that Syria refused to bow to Israeli and US demands to expel radical Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process, which have offices in Damascus.

"All that would be left would be for Syria to liquidate the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have found refuge on its soil, while waiting for the international community to implement the resolutions confirming their right to return to their homeland," the newspaper said. "These Palestinians were forced into exile by Israel, which used violence and terrorism to strip them of their most basic rights."

*Tishrin* said it was responding to a demand from Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak that Syria "liquidate" Palestinian radical groups on its soil.

Ten militant groups have offices in Damascus, including the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, which took responsibility for four suicide bombings in Israel.

Christopher said on Sunday that Washington differed with Syria "on whether they should give shelter to rejectionist organisations" such as Hamas.

The opposition Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the groups with offices in Syria, condemned the summit on Monday. The group said the meeting of world leaders "will not be able to put an end to the violence if the causes are not eliminated," — an allusion to Israel's occupation of Arab land.

Syrian newspapers also charged that continued Israeli occupation was the

reason for tension in the region. "If the Israeli occupation is not terrorism, then what is it?" the newspapers asked. "It is most strange that the world does not accuse Israel of terrorism although it drops tons of bombs every day on innocent civilians in southern Lebanon and exercises repression in the Occupied Territories."

Abraham Zarour, a professor of Arab-Islamic history at Damascus University, said Syria had agreed to take part in the Madrid conference on the assumption that it would be working for a comprehensive peace in the region. "But Israel violated this understanding by concluding the Oslo agreement with the Palestinians and the Wadi Arava agreement with Jordan — two agreements which did not realise a just and comprehensive peace that would guarantee security and break the cycle of violence," he said.

Syria, he continued, had called for a revival of Madrid because it "would plug the loopholes in the peace process, the imbalance that breeds violence." He pointed out that 80 per cent of all Palestinians, classified as refugees or expatriates, are not under self-rule "which means that peace is still deficient. As a result, the cycle of violence is bound to continue."

An official of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), another of the militant groups with offices in Damascus, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that peace could not be achieved except by Israel's complete withdrawal from occupied Arab lands, recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and the return of Palestinian refugees to their land. "But to search for partial solutions to the phenomenon of violence, while suppressing that phenomenon, will not reach the heart of the problem. The situation is bound to explode again in other forms," he warned.

This official charged that the Sharm El-Sheikh summit was based on double standards.

One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter: a question of definitions has kept Lebanon away from the summit, reports Zeina Khodr in Beirut

*An-Nahar* said that despite Syria's absence at the summit, the new coalition will send a clear message to Damascus. "It will alert it to the increasing capabilities against terrorism," the columnist said. "One of the main aims of the conference," he added, "is to increase the isolation of Iran and to drive a wedge between Syria and Iran who are close allies."

The US and Israel accuse Tehran of being the prime supporter of "terrorist" groups.

Takkiedine noted that Clinton is trying to create a coalition against Iran and Syria, similar to the coalition against Saddam Hussein before the Gulf War. "The US wants to isolate Iran and involve Syria deeper in the peace process by pushing it away from Tehran, the Palestinian opposition and Hezbollah." It wants to use the summit to pressure Damascus to make concessions.

Both Lebanon and Syria host a large number of Palestinian and Islamic fundamentalist groups that vehemently oppose the peace process. Washington has called on Damascus several times to close the offices of groups that oppose the Arab-Israeli peace process and to rein in Hezbollah guerrillas in south Lebanon.

Syria, in light of the summit, is expected to face more pressure. The US will exert all efforts to clamp down on all parties that are seen as trying to wreck the peace process.

In the interim, Lebanon will continue to pay the price for peace. Today, marks the 18th anniversary of the first Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The southerners live in constant fear in the wake of daily Israeli atrocities. No international conference was ever held to condemn the aggressions.

Tripoli

## The dissenters

Not surprisingly, Libya, Sudan and Iraq shunned the summit and heaped scorn on the participants

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has criticised the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, particularly Arab participation in it, and accused the United States and Israel of being the biggest terrorists of all.

"The biggest terrorist powers in the world today are the Zionists and the Americans, and the tension in the Middle East will not end until these brutal powers are finished," Gaddafi told Libya's official JANA news agency.

On state television, he said: "When we ask for an Arab summit in the interest of the nation, they tell us it is impossible, while the summit with the Israelis and the Americans is a priority and is quickly arranged."

Gaddafi said there were "murders and massacres perpetrated by the Americans and Israelis, in which hundreds of Palestinians and Libyans were killed, to which the world has not reacted". By contrast, he added, "the deaths of dozens of Israelis cause such arms-rattling," referring to the four suicide bombings by Hamas militants that killed 60 people.

"Since the world considers Arabs to be animals and the Jews to be human beings, I reiterate my proposal that the Arabs join the association for the protection of animals so that the world will feel compassion for them," said the Libyan leader.

The view from Khartoum was equally negative. Sudan described the summit as an attempt by the West to wipeout the world Islamic movement.

Ghazi Salahuddin, secretary-general of Sudan's National Congress, said the summit "is being viewed as an attempt to contradict the new Islamic phenomenon which many believe is a true expression of the will of the people." But he vowed that the movement will not be destroyed. Salahuddin also threw scorn on those participating in the summit. "The Arabs represented in the conference are irrelevant, they are just being used," he said.

In Baghdad, an Iraqi newspaper run by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday dismissed the summit as an absurdity, stage-managed by the United States.

"This ridiculous farce is organised by the United States, the biggest terrorist country in the world," the daily *Babel* wrote.

"The United States carries out international terrorism of all types under the nose of the UN Security Council and often with its backing," the newspaper added. It said the summit was a vote-winning ploy by US President Bill Clinton in an election year.

# 'Keep the faith'

President Hosni Mubarak, in his opening address to the Peacemakers Summit yesterday, urged Israel and the Palestinians not to lose faith in peace following suicide bombings in Israel to which Israel retaliated by blockading the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The following is an English translation of the text of his speech:

"I am happy to welcome you here on this spot of Egyptian soil, this meeting point between continents and civilisations, which brings together peoples eager to co-exist and interact creatively along the path of peace, development and progress."

"Your keenness to attend this conference and enable it to attain its objectives reflects your true commitment to the cause of peace and stability worldwide, particularly in the Middle East region which, in recent years, has witnessed an active movement and concrete progress toward a just and comprehensive peace that would terminate half a century of bloody conflict, violence and destruction and would place the region at the threshold of a new era of reconciliation and construction."

"All of you have participated in this endeavour and supported it since the Madrid peace conference was held in October 1991. It was natural that you would follow its developments with extreme attention and that you stand with the peoples of the region as they confront the obstacles and challenges facing the peace process and the dangers threatening its [the region's] peace and security at a time when [the region] sorely needs to devote itself to development, construction and the achievement of prosperity."

"You probably agree with me that our meeting [today] should represent an advanced step and a qualitative development in the speedy work for realising peace and reconciliation between peoples and intensifying the legitimate human struggle against terrorism and violence in all their forms and types, focusing in particular on the Middle East region which has extreme strategic importance for all the states of the world."

"This noble objective requires that efforts should be doubled to save the peace, safeguard its march, protect it against the danger of receding and generate a new momentum that will kindle the flame of hope in [our] souls."

"In order to achieve this, continuous and sincere work is necessary to realise concrete progress along the [negotiation] tracks during the coming few months, in a climate that is devoid of violence, threats and suppression, that safeguards the peoples' right to live in peace and security, free of fear and anxiety, and immune from condemnation by another people because a small minority became involved in acts of terrorism, fell in the abyss of extremism or committed evils which no religion or principle can sanction."

"To the Palestinian people, I say: you struggling people who have suffered and resisted in patience, who know your path and who projected the true purpose of your struggle, do not despair and do not surrender to false calls and defeatism... do not lose clear vision, after the wheel of peace has turned and after you received support from the various world powers, and after supporting the Palestinian cause became a collective international commitment from which there can be no deviation and no retreat. The entire international family will not let you down but will continue to support you and make it possible for you to purify your march from whatever may obstruct your movement and threaten your advance. You should maintain the power of decision-making, free from pressure and fear, for the destiny is your destiny, and your right to determine your destiny is well-established and preserved, and the future ahead of you is brimming with hope and aspirations."

"To the Israeli people I say: you people whose ancestors have lived side by side with the Arabs for long centuries in peace and amity, with the relationship between the grandchildren of Ibrahim [Abraham] based on brotherhood, cordiality and mutual respect for religious beliefs and cultures and shunning fanaticism, hatred and racism, I say to you that you must be aware that the future of the entire region, including Israel, is dependent on the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace and security for all sides and that dealing with some transient negative phenomena cannot be done by renouncing these values and principles or losing faith in peace, frittering away hope in the future or falling into the abyss of extremism and fanaticism — all these would only mean a return to the vicious circle of violence and destruction."

**To the Palestinian people, I say: you struggling people who have suffered and resisted in patience... do not despair and do not surrender to false calls and defeatism... The entire international family will not let you down**



only serve their criminal schemes. In view of this situation, I had called at an early stage for convening an international conference on terrorism and placed a specific proposal in this connection before the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 1986."

"In doing so, I was intention showing that the phenomenon of terrorism and extremism is not confined to a specific area or an ethnic, religious or cultural group. Specifically, it is not an Islamic phenomenon and should not be attributed to Islam at the expense of its noble teachings. In fact, it is a phenomenon that is hostile to Islam and Muslims just as it is hostile to the followers of other religions and cultures."

"Accordingly, we welcomed the convening of the international conference on combating terrorism in all its forms and types which was held on 19 February in the Philippines and in which most of the states represented at this conference participated. This conference laid down basic principles and adopted positive resolutions that constitute the first step along the path of the world community's fight against terrorism. It confronted all the states of the world with their responsibility of combating and resisting terrorism by all methods and means."

"What remains for us to do at this conference is to take even more effective and more decisive resolutions and lay down policies and arrangements for protecting the peace and security of the region against the dangers that threaten them, so that the chances of launching these [terrorist] acts that violate the simplest rules of humanity will be reduced, and so that the world community may be able to expose the forces that stand behind them and offer to serve their criminal schemes."

"The only key to peace and stability is a clear-cut bias in favour of peace because those who threaten security are the enemies of peace who seek to abort its march and obstruct its progress. You should rest assured that the Arab nation has no evil or treacherous intentions and that the Palestinian people are your closest neighbours and your partners in action for a better life. These people [Palestinians] have suffered, just as you suffered, from the arrows of recklessness and destructive extremism but these did not shake the faith which the great majority has in a just peace and their confidence in a secure future."

"To the friendly peoples who took our side in our march along the path of peace, reconciliation and construction, we express esteem for your responsible stand which indicates profound faith in the unity of human destiny and a firm ethical commitment to the causes of peace, justice and development."

"To the leaders who are participating in this historic conference, we express hope that we will take specific steps and measures to protect peace against the dangers and threats that obstruct its march and progress and introduce new mechanisms to ensure the unification of our efforts, as well as the efforts of the whole international community, to rout the forces of evil and terrorism and rekindle hope in the souls of the new generations that tomorrow will be better."

## 'Peace will prevail'

Urging "collective resolve" by the leaders attending the summit, President Bill Clinton outlined a three-point plan to win the battle for peace and a better future in the Middle East — condemnation of terrorism, a stronger commitment to a comprehensive peace settlement and an all out fight against terrorists.

The following is the text of Clinton's speech:

"From all around the world we have come to the Sinai to deliver one simple, unified message. Peace will prevail. This summit is unprecedented in the history of the Middle East. It would have been inconceivable just a few short years ago. It stands as proof and promise that this region has changed for good."

"Leaders from Israel and the Arab World, from Europe, from Asia, from North America. Twenty nine of us, shoulder to shoulder, joined in support of peace. We have gathered before to celebrate new milestones in our journey. Today we join in common defense against those who would turn us back. We are here because we know what is at stake."

"In the 18 years since Egypt and Israel made a miracle at Camp David, Israelis and Arabs have changed the course of history in their hands. Step by step, courageously, they have broken with the past, laying down the arms of war and opening their arms to one another."

"But with every milestone passed along the road of peace and progress, the enemies of peace have grown more desperate and more deprived. They know they cannot compete in the marketplace of ideas. They know they have nothing to offer but hardship and despair. And so they resort to murderous attacks that are an affront to the civilised world and to the moral precepts that lie at the core of the three faiths represented here."

"As President Mubarak has so eloquently stated, in the busy streets of Jerusalem, Ashkelon and Tel Aviv, suicide bombers launched a wave of terror to kill as many Israelis as possible. Ordinary men and women riding the bus to work, families shopping for the holidays, innocent children in their Purim costumes, murdered for the blood in their veins."

"Our hearts go out to the people of Israel and to all the victims of these atrocities, which also include Palestinians and Americans. Many of the

nations here today have experienced the nightmare of terror. "Death does not discriminate among the terrorist victims. Over the last two weeks, as I have said, losses were felt not only in Israel, but also in Palestinian, American and Moroccan homes."

"The hard won achievements of the Palestinian people are under direct assault. The merchants of terror would sell out their future and trade their dreams for despair. Arab mothers and fathers who seek a better life for their children understand the enemies of peace have targeted them as well."

"Let no one underestimate the significance of our gathering here today. Today the wall of division we face is not really between Arabs and Israelis. It is instead between those who reach for a better tomorrow and those who rail against it, between those who traffic in hate and terror and those who work for peace. To the forces of hatred and violence, I say, let us all say, you kill yourselves and others in the aim of killing peace."

"Yet today, as you see, peace survives. In peace we'll grow stronger. You will not succeed. Your day has passed. You have ploughed the fields of hatred, but here we are, coming to reach

unity and new strength to defeat you and to keep the promise and hope of peace alive."

"We who have gathered in Egypt today are committed to the search for peace. Our very presence here underscores the depth of our dedication. But words and symbols are not enough. The world looks to us now for action, and we must direct our collective resolve in three specific areas."

"First, we must be clear in our condemnation of those who resort to terror. Violence has no place in the future we all seek for the Middle East."

"Second, we must reinforce our common search for a comprehensive peace. We must press forward until the circle of peace is closed. And we must work to bring the benefits of peace to the daily life of people here, for if people lose their hope in peace, the terrorists will have succeeded. This would be the cruellest victory of all, and we must not let it happen."

"Third, we must actively counter the terrorists with all the means at our command, combining our efforts tangibly and joining our strength to defeat their evil aims. Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are responding to that challenge. Each of us here must do our part to help them succeed in their mission. We know we cannot

guarantee 100 per cent success, but all of us must demand of each other and ourselves 100 per cent effort. The danger we face is urgent. The challenge is clear. But the solidarity of the peacemakers will conquer the forces of division if we will resolve to keep that solidarity."

"We stand today as one, not far from the mountain where God gave the word to Moses, the law of humanity, tolerance and faith that guides our way today. We are the heirs of that moral legacy whether we be Muslim or Jew or Christian. From many lands and many different traditions, we came today, all speaking the language of peace."

"In the Bible, we are told that when they were grown, Isaac, the Patriarch of the Jews, and Ishmael, the Patriarch of the Arabs, met but once. They came together at the death of Abraham, the father they shared, the father of both peoples."

"Today, the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael have joined together in a spirit of rebirth, to secure the shared promise of a life of peace for all the peoples of this region. Those of us who come here today to stand with them must not allow the forces of the past to deny them the future they seek; that we all seek. Let our charge go forth from the Sinai today. We will win the battle of peace. Thank you."

## 'Terrorism has an address'

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres' speech to the Peacemakers Summit called on the international community to formulate a strategy to respond to the moral call for peace. The prime minister singled out Iran as the spearhead of terrorism.

The following is the text of his speech:

"Nine days ago, on the eve of the festival of Purim, two 12-year-old boys went to celebrate at the Tel Aviv Mall. Yovav Levy and Kobi Saharon were best friends. They had the innocence and freshness of youth. "Kobi studied in a class for gifted children. Yovav excelled in football. Their whole future was before them. Yet, in a split second, it came to an end at the hands of a crazed terrorist, a living bomb."

"Is there a God who permits a man to perform such a horrendous act? Is there a religion which allows one to commit suicide, to murder children?"

"Wars in the Middle East have claimed the lives of tens of thousands of young people. With every casualty, a whole world was lost."

"We do not ask the victims killed during wars, Kobi and Yovav were murdered by the ultimate evil — in a war against ending wars."

"They were among the youngest victims of the most recent terrorist attacks, but they were not alone. In Jerusalem, in Ashkelon and in Tel Aviv, other children, and ordinary people, young and old, Israelis and foreigners, were killed."

"Grief struck many homes and scores are still in pain. May the Lord comfort the sorrow and heal the pain."

"Yes, we suffered pain but

not despair. We shall do all that it takes to defeat terrorism, just as we shall mobilise all resources to further peace. This gathering signifies the civilised world's rejection of the evil of terrorism and its support for the peace process."

"Momentous and practical decisions must emerge here today. This conference must formulate a strategy and create an enduring coalition to respond to the moral call and to answer the practical needs through international cooperation."

"Terrorism knows no borders, so borders must not restrain action to smash the terrorist snake."

"This terrorism is not anonymous. It has a name, it has an address. It has bank accounts, it has an infrastructure, it has networks, it has a capital of terror. A conclusion must be drawn how to contain it."

"From the Palestinians, with whom we wish to complete the historic reconciliation, we demand the unequivocal fulfilment of the Oslo Accords."

"We do not ask the Palestinian Authority to defend our lives. Only we shall defend ourselves. It is solely our responsibility."

"The Palestinians must fulfil the obligations of an elected authority. They must fight to prevent terror, which is causing hardship in their midst. They must not tolerate murderous command centres. They must not permit illegal guns to aim at legal peace agreements."

"Terror threatens peace and stability in the whole world. Suicide methods and modern

weapons are an immediate danger. It will escalate once terrorists obtain non-conventional weapons."

"We are at a watershed. Our region is going through a period of transition. The dark days are at an end. The shadows of its past are lengthening. The twilight of wars is still red with blood, yet its sunset is inevitable and imminent."

"The Middle East is on the verge of a new day — better and more promising. Many barriers which separated Israel from its neighbours are gone."

"Yesterday's enemies are gathered here today as partners in the battle for a different tomorrow. The hunting grounds of cynics and sceptics are diminishing."

"There is news in the Middle East. It will be a new Middle East."

"I would like to thank all those present. First and foremost, President Clinton for his vital initiative."

"He proved not only his leadership of the free world but he has also shown himself as a great facilitator of peace as a new agenda."

"I thank the co-sponsor, President Yeltsin, whose presence here expresses his commitment to a new era."

"My gratitude goes to our host, President Mubarak of Egypt, first to make peace, who offered the beauty of Sharm El-Sheikh as an invitation to a new political landscape. My appreciation is extended to the leaders of Europe and Asia, who helped to realise peace in the Middle East and continue to do so."

"I also greet the leaders of the Arab countries present here, and would like to say that Israel, as it proved in its negotiations with the Palestinians, is resolved not to dominate others."

"Israel does not seek to gain territory. Israel has proved that

science is more important than territory. We can strain more at schools today than what we could conquer previously on the battlefield."

"We are not here out of fatigue or weakness. We are here out of a moral preference and a sense of strength."

"Let your children and our children know a future of peace. Let them march, safe and sound, through the gates of the next century, free of fear, equipped with knowledge and

wisdom into a new era for mankind."

"In the words of the Bible, 'See, I have set before you today, life and good and death and evil... I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life.'"

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we have chosen life. Let us all unite to wipe out the curse of terror and to receive the blessing of peace."

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DR. ANSARI AND HIS WIFE WITH DIETRICH STALMANN AT THE EXHIBITION

KURASAT ISTRATJIYA (35)



(In Arabic and English)

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## 'A firm and clear message'

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, in his summit speech, vowed to uproot terrorism because Palestinian independence and self-determination cannot be realized "in a sea of blood and tears".

The following is the text of his speech:

"In a precedent that has no match in contemporary history, this large gathering of world leaders has met twice within the space of a few months: the first time following the assassination of a leading figure who offered his life for peace, our departed partner Yitzhak Rabin, and the second time following a bloody and criminal series [of acts] that destroyed the lives of tens of innocent Israelis as well as some Palestinians, Americans, and Romanians and plunged us anew into the cycle of violence and terrorism. The objective of the two meetings was to direct a firm and clear message to the killers, a message to the effect that if it was possible to kill major leaders and peacemakers like Yitzhak Rabin and innocent citizens who were pursuing their daily lives, then their criminal success is short-lived because they could not kill the peace or assassinate the will of the region and the world, the will for construction and durable peace.

"I am one of those who lived through all the phases of the birth of violence in our country and region and today I feel the deep wound which was inflicted upon all of us.

"But with faith, confidence and determination to protect the peace, which are manifested by your conference, I and my friend, Shimon Peres, feel that we are not alone because the giant will of the world is on our side so that we may complete our march and so that the enemies of peace become an isolated minority that stands condemned by Palestinians and Israelis, the region and the world.

"We are not alone because each leader of you, by his presence today, conveys a message with the profound content that peace in our region is his own special cause as well as an overall international cause.

"I came today to convey the determination of the entire Palestinian people, who took to the streets shouting against violence and for peace, that we are confronting, and will continue to confront, terrorism and uproot it from our soil because our dream of freedom, independence and self-determination cannot be realized in a sea of blood and tears. By arduous work we shall confront this terrorism unleashed by the extremist and dangerous wings of Hamas and Jihad.

"At the same time, I say to our Israeli neighbours that our wills should be united today, more than at any time before, to make violence and terrorism a thing of the past which we renounce, and to make peace, that is based on justice, equality and human brotherhood, the sole future for all of us, our children, and your children, our mothers and your mothers, and for every man and woman who live on this holy land, for all of us, the sons of Ibrahim [Abraham].

"From this podium, I, a faithful Muslim, declare it clearly to all those who have faith in religion that God Almighty who revealed the three holy religions to mankind, has prohibited violence and the killing of man and considered the advocate of killing a violator of God's will and religion as well as all heavenly laws and religions.

"The voice of the noble men of religion, who represent the conscience of man and propagate heavenly religions, should be raised against violence and terrorism.

"Ladies and gentlemen, our common will to protect the peace and to deny the enemies of peace any opportunity make us today more determined than ever to follow up the measures and arrangements which we have taken, as well as the common action for resisting terrorism and cutting off its external strings as well as its centres of power which are spread out in the region around us.

"Completing the implementation of the Oslo agreements, which were signed in Washington under the auspices of President Clinton and in Cairo under the auspices of President Mubarak, and the Russian co-sponsorship of President Yeltsin, and with the support of Europe, Japan, all peace-loving nations and the United Nations, and the immediate opening of the final outcome negotiations are the best way to bury the dreams and schemes of the anti-peace conspirators.

"Therefore, I invite your noble gathering to examine the possibility of setting up a permanent international authority, including representatives of the sponsors of the peace process and all regional and international parties, to provide assistance for continuing the steps of peace and achieving coordination and cooperation for the protection of the peace process.

"If the confrontation of terrorism is to be comprehensive, then the major political task of achieving a firm, durable and comprehensive peace should be accomplished along with our joint efforts to confront terrorism and its regional and international sponsors.

"It is also urgent that economic and social arrangements should be made to alleviate the poverty, deprivation and unemployment of Palestinians and not to pursue [the policy of] blockade, starvation, economic siege, and preventing our workers from working. We have been exhausted by these collective punishments, whose continuation provides fertile ground for extremism and violence.

"Collective punishment was never the right tool for realising peace and stability. Terrorism against innocent civilians is attempting to put the hands of the clock backward after the sun of peace has shone with a beautiful dream which we called a new Middle East where peace, prosperity, stability, security and equality prevail.

"The Palestinian people should not be made a victim of the acts of terrorism: first, in the cycle of violence such as the massacre at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron and, second, by collective punishments and an economic blockade that [created a situation with] the proportions of a famine. Yes, the proportions of a famine, the siege of towns and villages and even the re-occupation of most areas in the West Bank in a dangerous operation designed to embarrass the Palestinian National Authority before its people and show that it is incapable of ensuring the availability of the minimum requirements of security and livelihood.

"Terrorism cannot be eradicated at a time when an entire people is suffering a siege and a blockade, a time when 100,000 workers have joined the large army of the unemployed. At the beginning of this year, our deficit stood at 790 million shekels or \$275 million. We are a poor state.



FATHI QADI

"The realisation of peace requires practical measures that would make every citizen feel that the fruits of peace are worth defending and protecting. Work has to be continued for implementing the concluded agreements fully, thoroughly and honestly, and according to their time-table.

"Ladies and gentlemen, let us offer a prayer to the sole and mighty Creator who called for peace on earth and among the people; let us work in accordance with God's will for a just and comprehensive peace that is irrevocable. This is the will that exists in the hearts and consciences of millions of people, one generation after another. Peace is the word of greeting used by every man every day in our country and in our region. May God's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you."

### A Madrid conference in Moscow

RUSSIAN President Boris Yeltsin called for another Madrid-type peace conference, in his address to the international anti-terrorist summit.

He supported Syrian calls for such a meeting, saying it should be held at least at the level of foreign ministers.

"I propose convening a conference similar to that of Madrid," Yeltsin said. "In Moscow or in any other place, we can call for a mini-Madrid conference at the level of ministers of affairs."

"We must take concrete steps to combat violent acts that are having repercussions worldwide," Yeltsin said.

"It has become necessary to unify and concentrate all efforts of the international community to fight this threat of terrorism," he said.

Syria boycotted the summit at the Egyptian Red Sea resort, calling instead for a meeting like the October 1991 Madrid conference which launched the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Yeltsin, whose country co-sponsors the Middle East peace process with the United States, said both Israel and the Palestinian National Authority needed international support in combating terrorism.

"All the forces in Israel, under the leadership of Shimon Peres, need support, not only moral but practical support by the international community," he said.

"The United Nations should be used because terrorism has no national feature and can hardly be dealt with by one single country," Yeltsin said.

### A mechanism for anti-terrorism

JORDAN'S King Hussein called for creating an "international mechanism" to uproot terrorism and demanded punitive measures against countries backing such attacks.

"We should arrive at an international mechanism to cut the links of financial support and training centres for terrorists," in all countries, King Hussein told world leaders meeting at Sharm El-Sheikh.

"In order to wipe out terrorism, we should face up to this phenomenon through concerted international effort not on a regional level," he said.

King Hussein stressed the need for creating an "international mechanism to identify terrorism and adopt ground rules and means to bury it with regard to its financial sources and training."

He also called for punitive measures "against any state harboring terrorism or hosting terrorist bases and organisations."

Likewise, King Hussein demanded international efforts to "bar terrorist organisations from running media stations or receiving support from certain wide-scope media outlets."

The king differentiated between "terrorist acts and Islam," saying the religion was based on "mercy and forgiveness" and not on bloodshed.

He noted that terrorism was not restricted to a certain religion or race, while referring to bloody operations in 1995 in London, Tokyo, the US state of Oklahoma and Addis Ababa.

## Anti-terrorist UN

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali offered the UN as a mechanism for combating terrorism when he addressed the Peacemakers Summit.

The following is the full text of his speech:

"A war is taking place. Terror and terrorism have declared war against peace and security.

"All of us at this conference have known the pain and horror of terrorist acts against our families, our friends, our nations.

"Terror is not confined to this region alone. Terror can strike in America, in Africa, in Europe or in Asia. No person, no people, no part of the world can any longer feel beyond the reach of terror or terrorism.

"The fight against terror and terrorism has gone on for years. Many brave men and women have worked to prevent terror, to find the terrorists, to break up their empire of fear. But more must be done.

"Why? Because terror and terrorism have become a global phenomenon. Because terrorists receive arms and funds from abroad. Because terrorists travel abroad to be trained. Because terrorists receive instructions from abroad. Because terrorists take refuge abroad after committing their crime.

"The globalisation of terrorism is sustained, because when terror takes place in a far-away land it often is easy to be indifferent; because countries may be legally limited in what they can do; because countries may use terrorists to advance their aims; because the media give terrorists the publicity they seek; because drugs and terror are globally linked; because unilateral — and even bilateral — action is not enough to deal with a threat that is global.

"The United Nations is the forum where a foundation for global action is being built.

"At the first-ever summit of Security Council members, in 1992, and at the Special Commemorative Session of the General Assembly, in 1995, heads of state and government agreed to act together to defeat terrorism.

"The nations of the world, by resolution of the General Assembly in 1994, adopted the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, a concrete and comprehensive action plan.

"Terrorism was branded by the nations of the world last January, in the General Assembly of the UN.

"These commitments are important, and they are global. But they are still only declarations. The task before us is to take this normative foundation as our platform for rapid and decisive action.

"The UN is ready to serve this cause, ready to serve as a mechanism for mobilisation on a global scale. The UN awaits your instructions."

### 'We've spelt it out'

BRITISH Prime Minister John Major, in his speech to the Peacemakers Summit yesterday, called for Iran and Libya to abandon their "vicious" support of international terrorism.

"Let us not forget where the core of this problem lies," said Major. "It lies with the bombers who so savagely shattered the lives of peaceful Israelis and with those countries which encourage, condone and actively support this terrorism," he said.

"I hope we will send from this conference a very clear call to those countries to abandon those vicious policies. We have spelt it out to Iran, we have spelt it out to Libya."

Both states have repeatedly denied charges of supporting terrorism while stressing the right of Arabs to fight Israeli occupation. The summit was called after Islamic suicide bombings killed 58 people in Israel.



## DELTA INTERNATIONAL BANK

FULLY ENDORSES THE

PEACE - MAKERS SUMMIT

AND

PRESIDENT

## HOSNI MUBARAK'S

UNABATED EFFORTS TOWARDS THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST AND HIS STEADFAST  
POLICIES AIMED AT COUNTERING  
WORLDWIDE TERRORISM

HESHAM ALY  
CHAIRMAN  
MASTERS OF TOURISM  
AND THE  
MANAGEMENT OF  
SONESTA BEACH  
RESORT  
SHARM EL SHEIKH  
TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO  
CONGRATULATE  
PRESIDENT MUBARAK  
FOR  
HOLDING THIS GREAT EVENT OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL  
SUMMIT FOR PEACE  
MAKERS  
AND CONFIRM THEIR FULL  
SUPPORT TO HELP ACHIEVE  
ALL GOALS TO ENSURE  
PEACE ALL OVER THE WORLD



## Death of a preacher

Sheikh Mohamed El-Ghazali, a prominent Islamic scholar and preacher, died in Saudi Arabia last Saturday of a heart attack. Omayma Abdel-Latif remembers him

Sheikh Mohamed El-Ghazali, a renowned scholar who preached Islam for over half a century, died on Saturday in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh of a heart attack. He was 79.

Generally viewed as belonging to the "liberal" Islamic trend, El-Ghazali was one of the few Al-Azhar-educated scholars to attempt to address later-day problems from an Islamic perspective. However, he faced criticism from leftists and secularists for allegedly justifying the 1992 assassination by militant Islamists of secularist writer Farag Foda.

El-Ghazali graduated from Al-Azhar in 1941 and later obtained the degree of *al-almiya*, the equivalent of a doctorate. He began his career as a preacher in mosques affiliated to the Ministry of *Al-Awqaf* and was promoted in 1961 to inspector of mosques. From 1964 to 1971, he headed the Islamic *Da'wa* (preaching) Department at the ministry. In this capacity, he travelled to various parts of the Islamic world, preaching, making presentations on Islam and the West, and suggesting Islamic solutions to modern problems.

In 1976, he was appointed as head of the Islamic Preaching Department at the Faculty of *Shari'a* (Islamic law) in Mecca's King Abdel-Aziz University. Later, the Algerian government, which was conducting a wide-scale Arabisation programme, enlisted his help in promoting the nation's Islamic identity, and El-Ghazali gave a series of lectures at the country's Islamic University of Imam Abdel-Qader in 1981.

Since 1987, he has been a regular contributor to *Al-Shaab* newspaper, mouthpiece of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party. "This is our religion" was the title of his column, which addressed controversial issues such as homosexuality, relations between Islam and the West and the wearing of the veil in a simple — but not too simple — way.

Despite his reputation as a liberal, he was nevertheless accused by leftist critics of being indirectly responsible for the assassination of secularist writer Farag Foda. Before the author was gunned down outside his Nasr City home, El-Ghazali had issued a *fatwa* (religious ruling) saying that the killing of apostates was sanctioned by Islam. He had also been quoted as accusing Foda of apostasy.

Another verbal battle broke out in 1994 when El-Ghazali attacked *Al-Ahali* newspaper, mouthpiece of the leftist Tawagham Party, for publishing Naguib Mahfouz's banned novel, *Children of Gebelawi*. *Al-Ahali* responded by accusing El-Ghazali of encouraging terrorism.

Earlier in his career, El-Ghazali had been a member of a three-man committee formed by the late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser to assess the novel when it first appeared in 1956. The committee condemned the novel as "representing an atheistic way of thinking", because it allegedly contained personifications of God and the prophets.

In 1965 he was detained for a little under a year, accused of belonging to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. But El-Ghazali always denied membership of the group, insisting that he was merely a "representative of Islam". He was a prolific writer on the topic, with more than 50 books to his credit, including *A Hundred Questions About Islam, Islam and the Economic Situation, Obstacles in the Path of Preaching, The Muslim, and The Battle of the Holy Qur'an*.

El-Ghazali held the state partly responsible for the spread of terrorism because, in his view, its schools failed to provide a religious education that was balanced and objective. He advocated dialogue as the best means of addressing the problem.

He expressed strong opposition to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, and to Beijing's International Women's Conference. He himself attended many conferences on Islam and the West in Europe and the United States, and helped in initiating a Muslim-Christian dialogue. In 1992 he won the state award for social sciences.

At a stormy General Assembly of the Press Syndicate, journalists were divided over the draft press law. Hopes had been pinned on the new law, drafted to stem the controversy caused by Law 93 of 1995, which contains harsh penalties for publication offences. But in the event, some journalists rejected the draft altogether, others demanded modifications and additions. Shaden Shehab attended

# Journalists debate press draft

The initial euphoria felt by many journalists at the completion of the draft press law drawn up to replace Law 93 of 1995 was short-lived. Journalists had hoped that the old law, which had raised storms of protest over its harsh penalties for publication offences, was finally being laid to rest. They were optimistic that the new draft, prepared by a government-appointed committee of journalists and legal experts, would usher in a new era of press freedoms and strike a balance between media rights and obligations.

But at an extraordinary General Assembly of the Press Syndicate held on Sunday, journalists were uncertain that the new law would actually replace Law 93 because the draft, which still needs parliamentary approval before being enacted into law, did not explicitly stipulate that Law 93 was being abolished.

With the syndicate's downtown headquarters packed with hundreds of journalists, the Assembly was clearly divided. For some, the draft was a good compromise, provided that certain modifications and additions were made. Others described it as Law 93 in another guise and said it should be rejected altogether.

The Assembly opened with a speech by Ibrahim Nafie, the syndicate's chairman, who said the draft was the fruit of arduous negotiations between the government and the syndicate, in which both sides had made concessions. As several journalists shouted objections, Nafie reiterated his approval of the draft. "My conscience is clear," he said, asserting that the proposed new law contained wide-ranging guarantees of journalists' rights.

However, Nafie was willing to concede that the draft was not ideal; instead he described it as providing "the maximum possible" for journalists, who had had to make only minor concessions. They had not sacrificed anything which would strike at the heart of their vocation, he said.

A member of the syndicate's council, Raga'i El-Merghani, then read out suggested additions and modifications which had been prepared on Saturday by a committee of journalists and legal experts.

When the floor was opened to speakers, Salah Elissa, a leftist and former member of the syndicate's council, declared his objection to the draft on the grounds that "it ignored our main objective, which is the repeal of Law 93". The draft, he said, did not meet "a minimum of the journalists' demands". He urged that it be rejected, and that journalists instead support another draft which had been prepared earlier by the Press Syndicate. Elissa also objected to a provision in the draft prohibiting prosecutors from taking syndicate members into custody while they are under investigation for publication offences on the grounds that, non-syndicate writers are excluded from the provision. He drew applause and cheers from some journalists when he suggested a three-hour sit-in at the syndicate on 17 March.

Raising his voice to make himself heard amidst applause, Nafie replied that the law was intended to regulate press affairs and could not possibly deal with those in other jobs or writers outside the Press Syndicate. Elissa retorted that journalists "should not give in to just anything that is proposed to them".

"We will not give in or make concessions regarding our rights," replied an angry Nafie. "When this happens, I will resign as chairman of the syndicate."

Abdel-Sattar El-Tawila, a writer for *Rose El-Youssef* magazine, praised President Hosni Mubarak for showing "flexibility". It was Mubarak, he said, who had given the green light for cancelling the provision in Law 93 allowing prosecutors to take journalists into custody while under investigation for publication offences. Tawila also praised Nafie and the syndicate's council "because it was they who made many of the journalists' gains possible".

To the surprise of many, Islamist writer Adel Hussein, who is known for his fiery anti-government articles in *Al-Shaab*, took a moderate stand on the draft. While acknowledging that it was not ideal, he described its provisions as "the maximum possible" that journalists could expect, provided that some additions and amendments were made.

Emphasising the necessity for the journalists to maintain their united front, Hussein said: "What we have achieved is because we presented a united front. In demanding our rights." He requested that another General Assembly be scheduled to discuss the outcome of the syndicate's attempt to introduce modifications to the draft.

Kamel Zohairi, a former chairman of the syndicate and a member of the committee that prepared the draft, took his cue from Nafie and Hussein, describing the draft as providing the "maximum possible" provisions. He said that if the draft was rejected, Law 93 would remain in force, hanging "like a sword over our necks".

Ayman Nour, a Watfist journalist and member of parliament, said that journalists should not accept the minimum — the draft prepared by the government committee — but should insist on the maximum — the draft prepared by the syndicate. Nour, who had submitted the syndicate's draft to the People's Assembly, said the syndicate should act to gain its approval by parliament.

Other speakers objected to a provision in the draft which held the journalist personally responsible for publication offences. This meant, they said, that if he were ordered to pay a fine, it would have to come from his own pocket.

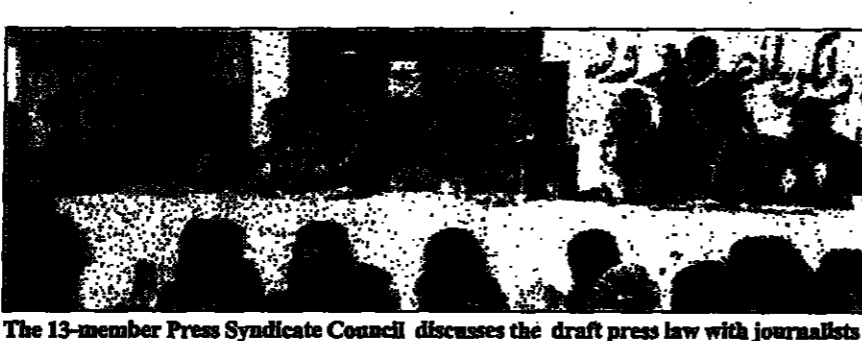
At the end of the debate, the majority demanded that the draft should be marked clearly as replacing provisions dealing with press freedom and publication offences which are contained in several laws, including the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedures Law and the law regulating Press Syndicate activities.

The Assembly then recessed for an hour to give the syndicate's council and journalists representing various trends time to prepare the resolutions. These included a decision that the Assembly would meet again on 7 April or once the government submits the draft, in its final form, to parliament.

After Nafie read out the resolutions, which suggested various additions and modifications to the draft, the majority left contented. But a minority stayed behind, shouting slogans against the council and the draft.



Nafie gives the opening speech before hundreds of journalists at the syndicate's headquarters during the 10 March General Assembly



Kamel Zohairi, Salah Elissa, Abdel-Sattar Tawila, Hussein Abdel-Razek

## The balance sheet

Admitting the shortcomings of the draft press law, syndicate chairman Nafie told journalists that, under the circumstances, it was the best compromise possible

In an opening address to the General Assembly, Press Syndicate Chairman Ibrahim Nafie said the new draft included mutual concessions, made by both the syndicate and the government, and was the fruit of arduous negotiations between the two sides. "The draft is not ideal under any circumstances. It doesn't meet all our demands and ambitions, but we've achieved the maximum possible," he said.

Three ex-chairmen of the syndicate — Hafez Mahmoud, Kamel Zohairi and Mahmud Mohamed Ahmed — as well as six members of the syndicate's council — had taken part in preparing the draft alongside him, Nafie said.

"The younger generation may believe that senior journalists have made real concessions in the process of negotiation and it is inevitable that some of them may condemn these concessions," he said.

"We will have to accept any remarks made in this connection patiently but these people should realise that life itself is the fruit of negotiation, at all levels and that the essence of democracy is negotiation... Those who ignore the inevitability of negotiating and compromising are shutting their eyes to the complexities of the situation and erroneously simplifying the political process as if it were one-dimensional, as if it moved in a single direction... The negotiations that produced the draft law necessarily included mutual concessions and this is the essence of any negotiation, which we must acknowledge and deal with clearly, realistically and courageously."

However, despite the concessions, Nafie said the draft had "realised enormous gains for the Egyptian press and will facilitate an enormous [press] revival in the coming period." These gains, he said, included:

- immunity from prosecution for the publication of news and information which a journalist believes to be authentic; assigning the Press Syndicate the authority of taking disciplinary action against journalists;

- sanctioning the right of journalists, without discrimination, access to information and official documents; punishing those [officials] who unjustifiably obstruct the journalists' exercise of this right as well as those who attack journalists whether by word or action;

- drawing a clear-cut distinction between news and advertising and providing guarantees that the impartiality of the press will not be compromised by advertising; prohibiting prosecutors from taking journalists into custody during the investigation of publication offences; reducing prison sentences for publication offences;

- providing strong guarantees that prosecutors will not abuse their power of interrogating, or taking legal action against, journalists;

- affirming the national character of the state-owned newspapers as a forum for a free, national dialogue between all views, trends and forces in society.

On the other hand, Nafie said, there were some important demands which remained unmet:

- restrictions on the publication of new newspapers were not eased;

- prison sentences for publication offences, although greatly reduced, were not abolished altogether;

- in cases of libel, a journalist continues to be held responsible for proving the authenticity of the information which he has published, while in many other countries the plaintiff has to prove that the information is false. This could put enormous pressures on the journalist and force him to reveal his sources — a practice that is unacceptable in a democracy.

The importance of these remaining demands should not be minimised, Nafie said. "Although we have not succeeded in realising these demands at this stage, there is nothing to prevent us from working actively to achieve them at a later stage. In fact, we should continue the struggle to achieve these demands."

In Nafie's view, the draft "strikes a new and delicate balance between conflicting interests related to freedom of expression. Although it provides stronger guarantees for freedom of expression, it also provides stronger guarantees for privacy and honour in the face of libel and press accusations. It does not deny the press the right to criticise public officials, including their private actions if they are strongly related to their public work. On the other hand, the press has a greater commitment to ascertaining the authenticity of an accusation and is held responsible for proving its authenticity."

"This delicate balance does not mean that one side emerged a winner and the other a loser. We were not in a boxing arena. We were looking for a way out of problems and complexities which affected all parties involved. This balance may have tilted to one side here and to the other side there. But, in all cases, it does not represent a balance of forces between a victor and a vanquished. It represents necessities and considerations which are all valid at the present moment, although they may change at a later stage."

The Press Syndicate, Nafie said, was using "all methods of peaceful union action" in its continuing struggle. "But it is not ready to commit suicide by involving itself in an unjustifiable clash with society or the state... We have struggled with all our strength, but without surrendering to the temptation to clash or use violence, which would be bound to destroy the banners of freedom. We have also maintained our unity, without compromising the right of every individual to express his views and to participate."

Admitting the shortcomings of the draft press law, syndicate chairman Nafie told journalists that, under the circumstances, it was the best compromise possible

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## 'Legitimate demands'

The Assembly decided to meet again in extraordinary session on 7 April, or as soon as the government submits the draft law, in its final form, to parliament.

In a statement issued after the Assembly, journalists said they had taken stock of the various views, had considered the draft's positive aspects as well as its shortcomings, such as its failure to meet journalists' demand to have Law 93 of 1995 annulled.

The fact that the draft did not include an explicit provision abolishing Law 93 was a basic shortcoming which placed journalists at the mercy of conflicting legal interpretations, the statement said. The Assembly also lamented the fact that some of Law 93's harsh penalties had been retained in the new draft.

Consequently, the Assembly said that basic modifications should be introduced to the draft. Under the suggested new provisions:

- Law 93 of 1995 as well as the Press Authority Law 148 of 1980, would be repealed;

- all investigations and court hearings currently being conducted in accordance with Law 93 would be halted;

- all provisions requiring imprisonment for those found guilty of publication offences, would be abolished;

- journalists could not be arrested because of their work and should not be questioned, or their homes and offices searched, because of a publication offence, except in the presence of a member of the prosecution authorities;

- the Press Syndicate would have the absolute prerogative to take disciplinary action against any of its members, as well as the exclusive authority to prepare a press code of ethics;

- the publication of a newspaper could not be suspended, nor its licence revoked, because the resulting damage would not be confined to the publisher, but would also affect the workers and reduce society's access to information;

- the majority of members of the boards of directors and general assemblies of the national press organisations must be elected;

- the private lives of citizens should not be investigated with the intention of causing damage. The private lives of public officials could be investigated, as long as the investigation aimed at serving the public interest.

The Assembly said that meeting these "legitimate demands" was a precondition for its approval of the draft, and affirmed that its opposition to Law 93 was not merely an "outburst of fury" but a "legitimate defence of the profession of journalism, as well as the present and future of journalists". It added: "Egyptian journalists, who have learned to remain steadfast and put up with the application of Law 93 against dozens of their colleagues in order to reach their target by means of a responsible national dialogue, affirm their intention to continue along the same path."

Consequently, the Assembly commissioned the Press Syndicate's Council to resume the "dialogue and negotiations" with the concerned authorities. The council was also charged with keeping syndicate members informed of developments.

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Edited by Wadie Kirolos

### EGYPTIAN ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY

Naser City, Abbassia/Cairo, Egypt

Ayoun Moussa Power Station Project

2 x 320 MW

Adjudication No. 164/95

YARD TANKS

Postponement of the Bid opening Date

Further to a/m adjudication, EEA

announces for interested tenderers that the

opening date of tenders is postponed to be

April 18, 1996 instead of March 16, 1996.

As officials negotiations on the Egypt-EU partnership agreement continue, exports on both sides remain locked in debate

## Working partnership

Export-oriented direct foreign investment will counteract the pre Egypt-EU partnership jitters, writes Niveen Wahish

Boosting exports and attracting direct foreign investments topped the list of remedies prescribed last week at a workshop organised by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) if Egypt is to withstand tough competition once its partnership agreement with the European Union (EU) goes into effect.

Leading Egyptian and European experts and officials met at the three-day workshop to discuss Egypt's trade opportunities under the new EU Mediterranean policy and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) regulations.

According to Ambassador Gamal Bayoumi, head of the Egypt-EU Partnership Unit at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, and head of the Egyptian negotiating team to the partnership talks, the agreement encompasses more than just trade. But "since trade affects our day-to-day life, it attracts the most attention," added Bayoumi.

Although the workshop was intended to specifically address the implications for Egypt of the EU-Mediterranean policy and the WTO trade laws, discussions essentially focused on the impact of the proposed partnership agreement.

Silvano Insua, coordinator of the UNCTAD project on technical and economic cooperation in the Mediterranean region, said that the objective of the creation of bilateral free trade areas in the Mediterranean will be "in line with WTO rules".

Following the implementation of the partnership agreement, Egypt's relationship with the European Union is expected to change from being an aid recipient to becoming an equal partner in trade. However, Bayoumi said, as the agreement stands today, "we are being offered an unbalanced proposal".

He explained that Egypt's readiness to open its market to European industrial products must be reciprocated by the EU's readiness to open its markets to Egyptian agricultural products and agricultural processed goods.

In the meantime, the EU's financial assistance is required to revamp certain industries and enable them to effectively compete with their European counterparts.

Under the Egypt-EU bilateral agreement, a free trade area between the two parties will be established by the year 2010. This implies that Egyptian industrial goods will gain unlimited access to Europe and vice versa. However, agricultural products and processed foods will not receive equal treatment since the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) excludes the liberalisation of agricultural products.

In this context, Gouda Abdel-Khalik, professor of economics at Cairo University, protested that "the basic requirements of free trade are not respected at all in the agreement." He pointed out that processed agricultural products should be treated as industrial products.

He noted that processed agricultural goods are classified as manufactured goods under the United Nations Standard International Trade Classification (SITC). Abdel-Khalik, therefore, called on the EU to apply the same classification.

Another controversial issue is the extent and pace at which Egyptian markets will be open to European products. Lorenzo Jachia, UNCTAD associate expert, said, "Competition from EU producers will no doubt increase the pressure on local industrial producers." In fact many producers might be forced to close down due to their inability to compete with European producers. However she added, "the format of the agreement provides for long-term transitional mechanisms and tighter safeguards."

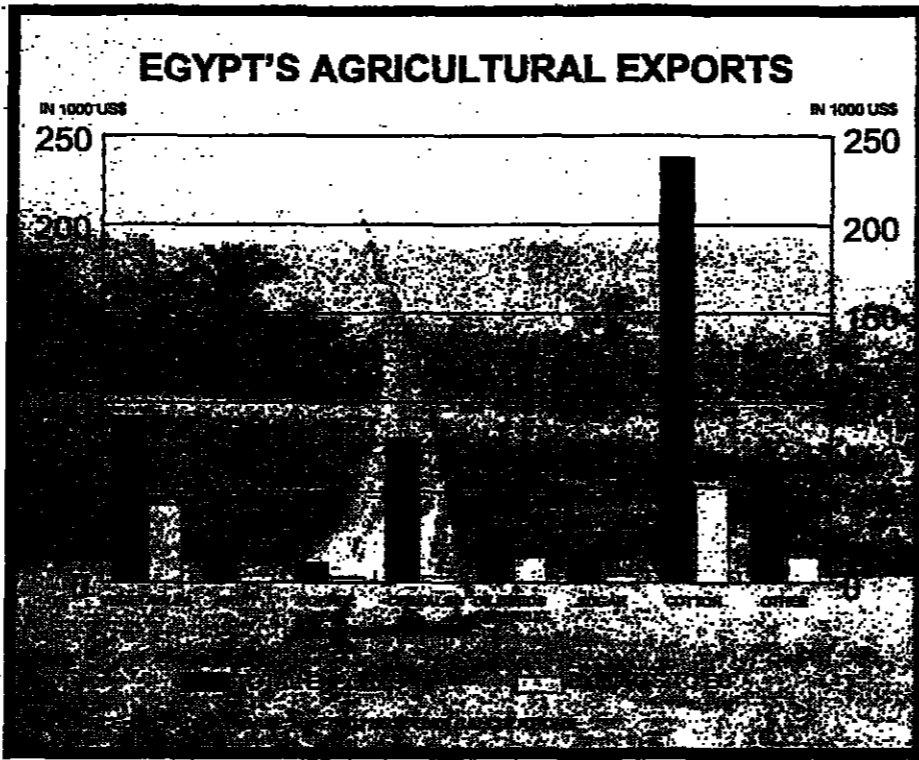
To offset the agreement's negative repercussions, Heba Handoussa, director of the Economic Research Forum, suggested that Egypt capitalise on the unlimited access of its goods into European markets.

Handoussa said that to guarantee the partnership's success, Egypt needs to "rapidly increase its exports." She added that by boosting exports, the government will be able to achieve the projected industrial growth rate of 10 to 12 per cent.

In addition to export promotion, Handoussa called for

greater direct foreign investment. She explained that in the past most foreign manufacturers established businesses in Egypt to substitute import needs. However, she added that today this practice must change and investors should be encouraged to build industries to export to Europe and the whole region.

"We must make it more profitable for European firms to invest in Egypt with the aim of exporting to the EU and the region, instead of simply exporting to Egypt," stressed Handoussa. She also called upon Egyptian businessmen to become more aggressive in



tapping the European market and in seeking European partners.

Handoussa dismissed fears that Egyptian industries will be overpowered by the Europeans. "The weak industries are a minority within the country's total industrial infrastructure," she noted. Handoussa said that strong industries in Egypt, such as the steel, textiles, fertilisers and chemical industries, could withstand EU competition provided they are restructured. She also recommended that "the smaller small industries confront the test of competition, the better, since they are mostly assembly industries."

Handoussa pointed out that the export infrastructure, which includes ports, shipping, and transportation, must be improved and should offer competitive rates.

Other participants supported Handoussa's recommendations, adding that a bloated bureaucracy and cumbersome red tape should also be eliminated. An overall restructuring of the taxation, judicial and legislative systems are necessary measures to encourage trade and investment.

Negotiations about the Egypt-EU partnership agreement have so far gone through five rounds. According to Bayoumi, 60 per cent of the articles of the agreement have already been approved. The remaining 40 per cent are the most controversial since they refer to the liberalisation of trade, agriculture and financing. There are other outstanding issues, namely, the rules of origin and competition, standardisation and intellectual property rights. The criteria for the governing of these issues are yet to be agreed upon.

## Italy as go-between

Italy promotes itself as the key player in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership zone, writes Gamal Nikrumah

How do we ensure that meetings between European Union officials and their Arab counterparts do not end up sounding like boring monologues? North African and Arab countries are more often than not in competition with one another. They do not act like a team, even though they say publicly that they are a group. Perhaps if businessmen, instead of bureaucrats, drafted background papers

though it was the hub of East-West trade in ancient and medieval times. "Italy is a country of small and medium-sized businesses. And a key requirement for Arab exporters to Italy is to develop and maintain sound trading relationships with them," explained Italian Ambassador to Egypt Francesco Aloisi De Lardere, in an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

What factors should Arab exporters bear in mind when dealing with Italy? Competition among traders in Italy is cut-throat. The key Italian import remains petroleum, and the 1986 oil price crash stimulated a steady flow of Italian oil imports during the last decade. Arab imports cover the entire spectrum of Italian goods and services.

Intimate personal relationships, rather than impersonal institutional contacts, are the key to doing business in both Italy and the Arab world. It is for this reason that Italy is often cited by Arab businessmen as the European country in which it is easiest to do business. De Lardere stressed, De Lardere, a career diplomat who served in Canada and Cuba among other countries, has a special interest in economic cooperation projects between Italy and the Third World. He was head of the Department of Cooperation and Development dealing with Italy's aid to the Third World before he came to Cairo.

So what are the major Italian development projects in Egypt today? "Italian technical cooperation in Egypt is concentrated in certain sectors such as power generation, agriculture and irrigation, health, professional training, environmental projects and the restoration of ancient monuments," De Lardere said. "Italians do not always blow their own trumpet," De Lardere added.

Italy was responsible for funding the second biggest construction on the river Nile, the new \$185 million Esna barrage in Upper Egypt. "The hi-tech lock, operated by computer with state-of-the-art Italian hydraulic systems, facilitates the passage of two large ships at the same go, in the space of 25 minutes," he explained.

Europe's Common Agricultural Policy had in the past stopped a wide variety of North African fruit and vegetables from reaching European markets — a bone of contention between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The same goes for North African exports of textiles and clothing to EU member-states.

While in 1995, Italian imports from Egypt increased by five per cent over the previous year, Italian exports to Egypt jumped by 7.8 per cent. Italy imports petroleum, vegetable oils, textiles and cotton from Egypt while it exports both electrical and non-electrical machinery, engineering products, cars, iron and steel, plastic and chemical products from Egypt.

There are between 4,000 and 4,500 Italians resident in Egypt today, a similar number in Tunisia and slightly more in Morocco. Some of Italy's southern Mediterranean trading partners have serious social problems which verge on political instability. Such unrest is of grave concern to the Italians. The fact that representatives of Algeria's opposition parties met in Rome a year ago to draft what they termed a National Charter is telling enough. While the Italian government had nothing to do with the meeting *per se*, the Rome-based Catholic Saint Ignace Society facilitated and organised the meeting.

Politics and commerce are inextricably intertwined. Italian Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli, in Cairo this week as head of the troika of foreign ministers from Ireland, Spain and Italy, said that European foreign ministers meeting in Sicily this week decided to dispatch a high-powered European delegation to Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran to persuade those states that it is in their economic interests to cooperate more closely with the EU. The EU has come under intense pressure to halt its policy of "critical dialogue" with Iran, Israel and the United States are pressing the EU to get tougher on Iran, Iraq and Libya.

Energy-deficient Italy is the European country most affected by the political and economic ups and downs of its energy-rich neighbours to the south. A new trading bloc is in the making. Italy played a pioneering role in the EU's Mediterranean initiative. Italy has been advocating for years the creation of a European-Mediterranean Agreement. "We've never believed in fortress Europe. We've been traditional supporters of free trade," De Lardere said.

The Euro-Med partnership was launched by the EU, 11 southern Mediterranean states and the Palestine National Authority in Barcelona last November. Later this month, an intergovernmental conference will be formally launched by European leaders at a summit meeting in the northern Italian city of Turin, underpinning the Italian presidency of the EU. The meeting is designed to reform and streamline European decision-making. It is hoped in the Arab world that the Euro-Med partnership will not be overlooked.

The accords signed between the EU, on the one hand, and Tunisia and Morocco, on the other, last year are to be replicated in 1996 by a similar association agreement with Egypt. Italy has for at least a millennium or two made its geographical proximity to the North African markets a cornerstone of its export drive. The southern shores of the Mediterranean have also traditionally been important sources of Italy's imports. In a nutshell, Italy is a natural trading partner of the North African region.

## Egypt-IMF negotiation continue

An IMF team in Cairo last week for talks with the government said it would return to Egypt later this month for further negotiations over the second phase of the economic reform programme. Ghada Ragab reports

Egypt and the International Monetary Fund have yet to reach agreement that would represent IMF seal of approval on Egypt's economic reform policies as would enable Egypt to obtain a \$1 billion debt write-off under a 1995 agreement with the Paris Club of creditor nations.

The two sides are working on a draft programme that would put the Extended Fund Facility agreement, signed in 1993, which provides IMF support to the Egyptian reform programme. The outcome of these talks would be subject to the approval of the IMF Board of Directors.

Disagreement between the two sides over the IMF claims that the Egyptian pound's exchange rate was overvalued stalled talks between the two sides for about two years. However, an IMF routine assessment of the economy last September found signs of economic recovery in increasing growth rates and exports.

The IMF executive board then urged the IMF staff and the government to resume talks. Egyptian elections at the end of last year and last January further delayed the talks, but the two sides say the negotiations are now well on their way.

Refuting claims that there are any major problems marring the negotiations, Minister of State Youssef Boutros Ghali told *Al-Ahram Weekly* the talks were taking their normal course.

"These talks, when they deal with structural issues of this magnitude, just take time," Ghali said. "It is a very laborious process. It is a document that is quite detailed."

The Egyptian government is keeping the lid on the ongoing negotiations, attributing this reticence to the difficulty of formulating a comprehensive technical programme amid a public debate on every detail of the talks.

**Next week: Al-Ahram Weekly will publish a comprehensive interview with Minister of State Youssef Boutros Ghali on the achievements of the economic reform programme and the challenges ahead.**

## German aid debated

Although widely lauded by the People's Assembly's economic committee, the terms of a German-Egyptian agreement raised some controversy. Gamal Essam El-Din reports

quite acceptable. The loan is to be paid back over 40 years, with a 10 year grace period and an interest rate as low as 0.75 per cent.

Other MPs, however, were not so enthusiastic. Arguing that the agreement gives the German side the upper hand, these MPs, the majority of whom were businessmen, explained that it provided Germany with a means of converting the grant into a loan, and would subject the terms of both the loan and the grant to German laws, even if these are in conflict with Egyptian laws. The MPs also criticised the fact that feasibility studies

for the projects funded by the agreement were not conducted.

The problem with German aid to Egypt, in particular, said Talaat Mustafa, an MP and businessman from Alexandria, and European aid in general, is that it mainly serves the economic interests of donor countries.

"We all know that European countries use these grants and loans to support their economies by helping their local companies to sell their products and market their commodities," said Mustafa. Egypt, he emphasised, as a large consumer market, is deemed ideal

by German and European suppliers.

Following long discussions, it transpired that the Assembly had already approved, in the past, many such agreements with European countries under similar terms.

Ahmed Abu Ismail, a former finance minister, and Mustafa, both criticised item 4 of article 2 which stated that part of the environmental grant will be earmarked for raising the standard of living of lower-income households. Mustafa said that this means the Egyptian government could use some of the grant money to cover the deficit in some sectors, or to give a "masked" subsidy to members of some lower-income brackets in the form of subsidised commodities instead of using the money for environmental protection.

Abu Ismail added that the absence of a feasibility study for the suggested projects could also allow that grant money to be used for other purposes. He stated that since the grant is called a "financial contribution" in the agreement rather than a "grant", there is the possibility that the grants could be changed into loans.

However, a representative from the Ministry of Economy (MOE) said that a number of meetings were held between the Egyptian and German sides, resulting in agreement on the number of projects and the amount of money to be allocated to each of them.

### CIB on NYSE

PLANNING is under way for the listing of some of the Commercial International Bank's (CIB) shares on the New York Stock Exchange later this year by issuing Global Depository Receipts (GDR). Should this venture succeed, CIB will become the first Egyptian company to trade its shares on the global market.

The size of the GDR issue is expected to range between 15-20 per cent of the bank's shareholder equity, which stood at LE980 million in June 1995. The GDR will either involve raising new capital, selling some of the National Bank of Egypt's (NBE) stock in CIB or a combination of the two. The NBE holds 42 per cent of the CIB's shares while the International Finance Corporation (IFC) controls five per cent. The remaining percentage is owned by bank employees, Egyptian and foreign investors. The announcement about the GDR issue is scheduled to be made in mid-March and will make the bank the third Middle Eastern institution to issue GDRs. In October 1995, Lebanon's Banque Audi launched a GDR issue which raised \$34 million. Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur is also planning a GDR issue in March that should generate about \$50 million.

Funds raised by a GDR issue are deposited with an international bank, while the receipts are traded on an international exchange market and, as a result, are considered more attractive to the foreign investor than investing directly into regional markets. Dealing and settlement procedures are also simpler since they are listed on more liquid markets.

CIB is considered to be Egypt's top performing bank since its shares were placed for public subscription in 1993. Over the last two years, the value of its shares has increased almost three-fold, rising from the initial price of LE260 to LE611 in March 1995. The bank reported audited net profits of LE218 million for 1995 compared to LE205 in 1994.

A financial cooperation agreement signed last October between Egypt and Germany provided for a DM115 million loan (approximately LE265 million) for repairs and maintenance of the Naga Hammadi Barrage in Upper Egypt and the construction of a windmill at Zaafarana on the Red Sea coast for generating electricity. The agreement also included a DM56 million grant (LE130 million) to establish an environmental protection fund and a number of elementary schools.

Members of the People's Assembly's Economic Committee, after studying the agreement, expressed their enthusiasm for it, saying that it should be instrumental in combating industrial pollution in the Nile, in cleaning up the supply of drinking water in Egypt and protecting other water resources. The terms of the loan, they said, were also

### Market Report

#### Variable GMI

ONCE again, the General Market Index declined, falling to 203.97 points for the week ending 7 March. The volume of transactions, however, increased by 12 per cent over the previous week's level to stabilise at LE40.16 million.

The index for the manufacturing sector also declined, falling by 0.87 points to close at 266.65 as many of the sector's companies witnessed a decline in their share value. The Paints and Chemicals Industries Company lost LE1.9 per share to close at LE75. Shares of the Eastern Tobacco Company also fell in value, declining by LE1.2 to close at LE39.55. It was, however, the Egypt Iron and Steel Company which suffered the greatest loss in terms of percentage. Falling by 9.09 per cent, the company's shares closed at LE2.

Other manufacturing sector companies, however, found their way in the winner's circle. For the second consecutive week, the Family Foods Company's shares gained LE15 to close at

LE220, while those of the United Arab for Spinning and Weaving Company gained LE0.74 to level off at LE37. Shares of the Egypt Soft Drinks and Food Preservation Company (Mids) also rose, gaining LE0.5 each to close at LE29 and LE 39.5 respectively.

Financial sector companies, on the whole, did not perform so well. The share value of the Mitr Exterior Bank decreased by LE25 to close at LE480 per share, while those of the Commercial International Bank (CIB) lost LE9 to close at LE466.

Breaking from the pack was the Gulf for Arab Investments Company which captured the lion's share of the trading action. But while 1.03 million of its shares changed hands, accounting for 64.78 per cent of total market activity, its shares lost LE0.14 to close at LE1 per share.

In all, the share value of 20 companies increased, 31 decreased and 27 remained unchanged.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

## Lisez dans



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La symphonie des klaxons

□ Médecine du sport

Le mal du football égyptien

Rédacteur en Chef  
Exécutif  
Mohamed Salmawy

Président  
et Rédacteur en Chef  
Ibrahim Nafie



- Sommet de Charm Al-Cheikh  
Les Grands au chevet de la paix
- Chômage  
Un secteur en pleine croissance
- Camille Cabana, président de l'IMA  
L'Institut du Monde Arabe est une passerelle
- Portrait d'Edouard Al-Kharat  
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## World Bank's African agenda

By Tetteh Hormeku-Ajei

Over the past two years, the World Bank (WB) has increasingly come under fire for its unilateral imposition of a neo-liberal economic agenda that has resulted in widespread job losses, the gradual dismantling of the welfare state and the impoverishment of the middle and working classes. This holds especially true for Africa where the bank's structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) have failed to significantly increase economic growth and improve standards of living. In order to avert further criticisms and allegedly broaden the decision-making process, the WB outlined the Africa Region Participation Plan with the specific objective of making participation a key factor in national policy formulation.

There is a little story in the annals of the bank's history which sheds light on this. In its paper, *The World Bank and Participation*, the bank approvingly cited participation by the representative work-place and community-based Ghanaian Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. The committees participated in workshops on structural adjustment in the 1980s, which the paper considered one of the innovative means by which the Ghanaian government achieved the broad acceptance of SAPs.

Yet in WB documents relating to Ghana in the period from the early to mid-'80s, there was a consistent and strident opposition to these committees. The WB saw the activities by which these committees, especially the factory-based ones, attempted to acquire an effective say in the management of factories as a deterrent to private enterprise and foreign investment and, therefore, to economic sense.

Those who know suggest that the WB's later approval of these committees arose not from a conversion of faith, but because the committees were stripped of their functions as vehicles of workers' participation in factory management. The committees were thereby reconciled with the bank's preference for a particular form of national economic management.

One concern above all else drives the WB's interest in participation: the performance of its loans, that is the need, in its own words, "to ensure that bank-supported policies and projects perform well on the basis of strengthened commitment and broad-based ownership".

The bank defines participation as a "process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, and the decisions and resources which affect them". Who are the stakeholders and how do they "participate"? The primary stakeholders are governments because they are WB shareholders, its principal clients, the ones responsible for repaying loans and the "ultimate decision-makers for the policies for which bank assistance is sought".

At the other end of the spectrum of stakeholders are the poor, according to the bank's proclaimed objective "of helping the poor". Between these two, that is government and the poor, the bank includes as other stakeholders those directly or indirectly affected by specific policies. The most powerful stakeholder of all is, of course, the bank: it has the power to withhold loans, determine its disbursements and decide on the relevance of participants.

Among the identified stakeholders only the bank and the governments remain constant. The rest, even the poor, are determined by their relevance to the situation and type of activity to be supported by the bank. Participants must have a direct or indirect stake in an operation supported by the WB.

A flavour of the problems posed here is given by the process of the planned privatisation of telecommunications in Ghana. As listed in the Africa Regional Action Plan, participation in this was achieved through two workshops. When I went to see the state official in charge of the workshops, I asked whether there were any consumers at the workshop. He said no, and this confused me because the plan said yes. But he insisted, and proceeded to justify that they were not necessary. Needless to say, I left, more confused. Now if there was disagreement among the workshop owners as to the relevance of consumers in general, you can imagine what happened to the poor.

For the poor and the marginalised, this approach to defining stakeholders and their participation has a devastating effect on the quality of their participation. The fact that their right to participate is determined by their relevance to the project also means that only specific groups of them will at any given time be involved in participation.

The irony is that the bank also wants to ensure that elites do not capture participation away from the direct stakeholders, especially the poor and vulnerable who are excluded from the development process precisely because of their lack of access to the various infrastructures of power. But by fragmenting the organisation of the poor, the bank undermines the only strength they have to counter the power of networking which the elites possess because of their access to that infrastructure.

The bank justifies the disempowering logic of its approach to participation with a curious interpretation of its own charter. According to the bank's document on participation, it cannot attempt to "directly increase the political influence of the poor". Why? Because its charter prevents it from intervening in the political system of its client states.

This is curious because it undermines the bank's own concern with loan quality. For if the bank admits that broad stakeholder participation is a precondition for loan performance, then nothing prevents it from withholding loans from a dictator. However, withholding loans from a government so as to force it to change its policy framework is surely intervention in the political system of the country.

Beyond the subtleties of political "interventionism", the bank lists a wide range of activities as targets for mainstreaming participation in the Africa Region Participation Plan. These include public expenditure reviews, participatory poverty assessments and participatory formulation of the Country Assistance Strategies.

One striking feature of all these activities is that despite serious differences in quality across departments, all of them qualify as participatory. So one department confidently enthused that the participation culture was fully engrained in people's minds. Perhaps it overlooked the fact that a huge number of planned and completed activities involved only workshops, seminars, presentations and briefing papers.

All these activities simply provided information. The ultimate effect of this flurry of activities is to reduce participation to box ticking on a scoring card.

The political fragmentation of labour and the reduction of participation to paper work illustrate the bank's *modus operandi* where policies decided from above are implemented and facilitated below, a throwback to the classic top-down approach. To correct this, the WB must open its programmes and processes to participation by all people in their capacity as citizens, and not as stakeholders ultimately determined by the bank.

The writer is a Ghanaian lawyer with the African Secretariat of the Third World Network.

# The smile on a child's face

How much does the World Bank listen to NGOs when it draws up its controversial development plans? Faiza Rado finds out at a workshop in the Ghanaian capital Accra

"We will work together so that we can bring back the smile on a child's face," affirmed outgoing World Bank (WB) vice-president for the African region, Kim Joycox, kicking off the Third African NGO-WB Consultation Workshop held in Accra, Ghana, between 26 and 29 February.

Organised by the Integrated Social Development Centre in collaboration with the Ethiopian-based Inter-African Group, the meeting gathered representatives of 30 African and international non-governmental organisations. Also present was a high-level WB delegation including Ravi Kanbur, the chief economist for Africa, and Dunstan Wai, a senior policy advisor at the bank. Representatives of the Ghanaian government included Helen Allotey, senior economics officer at the Ministry of Finance, and D S Boatens, minister for employment and social welfare.

In the workshop, NGOs demanded that the Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) — a model outlining the bank's development plans — be made accessible to the NGOs and their grassroots constituencies. "Many NGOs are interested in reforming the CAS to be a document that reflects viewpoints broader than simply those of the bank and to some extent governments in terms of a country's needs and priorities," reported the Ghanaian weekly *Public Agenda*.

At the workshop, discussions dealt with the necessity for NGOs to participate in the decision-making process since they represent the interests of the poor, whose livelihood is dramatically affected by WB policies. "In most cases, decisions about development are made by people sitting in board rooms, to whom these questions are essentially theoretical and have no immediate impact on their daily survival," said Horst Kleinschmidt, deputy director of the South African-based Kagiso Trust. "Poor people should cease to be objects of development and be recognised as having the most intimate knowledge of their own development needs," he added.

Although WB officials were clearly reluctant to disclose information on CAS, describing them as internal documents, they appeared willing to let NGOs access the bank's research through their newly established NGO liaison officers. Bank executives also expressed their desire to cooperate with NGOs, which can channel information about specific community needs to the bank and thereby support the successful planning and implementation of WB projects.

Bank President James Wolfensohn, addressing workshop participants through a television hook-up with the Washington headquarters, confirmed the bank's commitment to enforcing the new policy of making NGOs partners in the policy-making process, which had previously been limited to government-WB negotiations. "How can we but welcome this opportunity to expand communication channels and democratise the process by listening to the people's demands? And who is more apt to express these demands than representatives of the NGO community?" said Wolfensohn.

During the three-day workshop, WB officials reiterated the "sincerity of their commitment" to engage NGO participation and disseminate relevant data and documentation. "Transparency, information sharing and participation" seemed to be the theme of the bank's new game. Yet this move towards a more human approach on the bank's part was seriously questioned by many NGO participants because of the WB's neo-liberal economic platform.

Since the WB imposed structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) as a loan precondition in the early 1980s, the bank's loan strategy in sub-Saharan Africa has caused a 330 per cent increase in the area's collective debt. On average, countries in the region owe the equivalent of 109 per cent of their gross na-

tional product.

Claiming to redress macro-economic imbalance, due to budget, balances of payment and trade deficits, as well as inflationary trends, the international funding institutions have advocated privatising the public sector, liberalising the exchange rate, devaluing the currency and removing tariff and trade barriers. As a consequence of the latter, Southern nations are losing entire industries because they are unable to compete with subsidised Northern imports that are flooding their markets. This costs them \$500 billion a year in lost revenues, whereas their annual foreign aid receipts amount to less than \$50 billion.

Expressing scepticism about the bank's alleged reform plans, Kwesi Anyemedu, professor of economics at the University of Ghana, commented, "I came to observe this strange animal in action: the NGO-WB collaboration." Such collaboration seems unworkable because the bank and the NGOs represent diametrically opposed interests, added Anyemedu.

Ogoh Alubo, professor of sociology at the University of Jos, Nigeria, also expressed reservations about the bank's motives to *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "In the workshops on WB processes, we received the kind of information about CAS that many of us have been unable to access in our individual countries," he said. "And through the NGO-bank liaison offices we hope to get more information in the future. But this is as far as it goes, and even this remains questionable. Bank representatives didn't commit themselves to provide information which isn't already available in the public domain. Their only commitment was to facilitate information channels."

In recent years the bank's policies have been severely criticised for globally in-

creasing rather than decreasing poverty. "In Africa, 200 million out of 600 million people live under the poverty level and conservative WB estimates project that current poverty levels will increase by a further 50 per cent by the year 2000. The bank is using this and other forums as public relation stunts," Alubo explained.

"While high-level bank officials affirm their intention to engage in dialogue with civil society, they are in reality seeking co-option. Although they may finance some NGO-sponsored projects at the micro level, they certainly won't change the macro policies that are crucial in shaping the countries' economies and people's destinies," he concluded.

Lawyer Tetteh Hormeku-Ajei from Third World Network Publishers agreed with Alubo. "Participation is only relevant when and if it applies to the entirety of the process of national policy-making, its framework and its fundamental presuppositions," he said. Hormeku-Ajei also illustrated the bank's professed objective of "helping the poor" and making them participate in the formulation of policy in Ghana. "After having negotiated the privatisation of the national telecommunications system in sole consultation with the government," explained Hormeku-Ajei, "the WB organised two workshops gathering the groups they perceived as the main stakeholders in the plan, namely representatives from the investment market and potential investors. Labour union leaders weren't consulted, although workers facing retrenchment and massive job losses had a major stake in the privatisation plan. The bank's only statement concerning labour said 'that their needs would be addressed' at some point. Telecommunication may be a serious national issue, but there was no poverty in it."

Ghana has been conventionally cited by WB authorities as a showcase model for SAPs and for being the most "structurally adjusted state" in Africa. Since 1983, Ghana has concluded 16 SAPs with the WB and the International Monetary Fund. "These policies have given Ghana an average real growth rate of five per cent a year, reduced inflation from an annual 123 per cent in 1983 to 18 per cent in 1991, restored confidence, and stimulated investment. Debt arrears of \$600 million were erased by 1990," wrote the *Financial Times*.

Despite the rosy picture, Ghana's economy faces a grim reality. Judged in terms of effecting real debt relief, SAPs have so far been a failure. In fact, the country's external debt rose from \$1.7 billion in '83 to \$3.5 billion in 1990. And the WB-required increase in cocoa production as a cash crop was accompanied by a 48 per cent decline in international cocoa prices between '86 and '89.

Import liberalisation resulted in the loss of hundreds of private sector jobs in the textile industry. The WB-imposed social spending slashes caused the loss of 50,000 public sector jobs and an estimated 15 per cent of the entire labour force were laid off. In Ghana's sprawling urban centres, 59 per cent of the population live under the poverty line. A figure only topped in famine-wrecked Ethiopia in Africa. Between 1988 and 1996, the General Agricultural Workers Union registered the loss of 80,000 members, the union's Deputy General Secretary, Kingsley Oti-Nkansah told the *Weekly*.

After reviewing various surveys, Charles Abugre, an economist at the Integrated Social Development Centre, wrote that the available evidence suggests increasing inequality, declining food self-sufficiency and a rise in absolute poverty.

Having been instrumental in creating such appalling material conditions many delegates to the Accra conference found it difficult to envision how Kim Joycox proposes to bring back the smile on a child's face.



Sudanese citizens going to work in the centre of Khartoum unconcerned with the general elections. Life in the Sudanese capital continues as normal during the elections. Ten million Sudanese are to elect a president and 275 deputies for a new 400-member parliament (photo:AFP)

## Genocide alert in Burundi

Over one million refugees have left Burundi for neighbouring Zaire in the last three months as ethnic fighting has escalated. Will the crisis develop into another Rwanda, asks Mariz Tadros

The United Nations failed to intervene in time to prevent the crisis in Rwanda from escalating into a full-scale bloodbath costing over half a million lives, according to a recent report compiled by 52 independent consultants from 20 countries. The report suggested that "a modest increase in UN troops would either have stopped, or at the very least substantially limited, the killings, particularly in the first weeks."

The report, to be officially released on 12 March, is timely. UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali recently warned that genocidal massacres could break out in Burundi unless UN member-states took active steps to ease ethnic tensions between the minority Tutsi and majority Hutu — the same ethnic mix as in Rwanda.

Burundi has been in a state of civil war since 1993 when President Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, was killed by the Tutsi-dominated military forces in an attempted coup. Médecins Sans Frontières, an international humanitarian organisation, estimated that 15,000 Burundians were killed in 1993 alone. Since then, more than 100,000 have died in the fighting; they were mostly Hutu.

"Less than two years after the genocide in Rwanda, the international community must not be caught unprepared," Boutros Ghali said recently. He proposed a stand-by multinational force which would be ready for immediate deployment. Its mandate would be "to deter massacres, provide security for refugees, displaced persons and civilians at risk and protect key economic installations". An official from a European Union

team visiting Burundi, Marcello Ricovero, took a more cautious attitude. "The international community should be careful in adopting contingency plans, because the Burundian authorities, and Burundian public opinion, are totally against them," he warned.

Professor Cyrus Reed, director of the African Studies Centre at the American University in Cairo, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that it would be no surprise if Burundi perceived the UN proposal as unjustified intervention in its domestic affairs even if it was in the name of human rights protection. Reed was sceptical of the wisdom of the idea of sending forces to Burundi, insisting that conflict resolution through international mediation was a much more effective way of tackling inter-communal ethnic tensions. "If you get a bodyguard for every individual in Burundi, then perhaps you can prevent the fighting," he said. "But to actually send a small multinational security force would do nothing to prevent the fighting. It is not a long-term solution."

Reed referred to the ineffectiveness of the minuscule security force sent to Rwanda at the commencement of the crisis in 1994 when it had a very limited mandate: "When the going got hot in Rwanda, what did the UN do? It put its tail between its legs and ran into the hotels and said, 'Don't shoot us! We can't shoot anyone and you can't shoot us.'"

According to Reed, specific measures by the international community are needed to save Burundi from becoming another Rwanda. "Burundi is not quite Rwanda yet. It is not half a

million dead in two to three months... But we are now dealing with a lower-intensity warfare which is dividing people along ethnic lines and there are examples of people being shot indiscriminately because of their ethnicity."

Reed suggested that, since a lot of Hutu militia operated out of Zaire, one of the measures which the international community could take was to put pressure on Zaire not to open its borders. He added that the question of refugees fleeing ethnic violence was problematic. It is estimated that one million refugees left Burundi for Zaire in December 1995 and January 1996 when the fighting intensified.

The conflict in Burundi is not strictly along ethnic lines. Rather, according to Professor Reed, the fighting is politically motivated but given expression through ethnic identity. "In Burundi, when the opposition begins to get organised, you just shoot them," Reed said, alluding to the killings of 1972 and 1988 when Tutsi military forces killed 100,000 and 200,000 Hutu respectively. "My feeling is that in Burundi's case ethnicity is a political ploy. The reason that I, as a Tutsi soldier, shoot you, as a Hutu woman, is because I am afraid you are supporting the Hutu militia... People have mobilised around an ethnic identity and that is what is keeping them going right now."

Reed rejected the argument that ancestral hatred is the cause of repeated ethnic outrage between the Tutsi and Hutu in Burundi today. Historically, the status quo has remained almost irreversible. There has been an institutionalised inequality in which the

Tutsi are financially, socially and militarily more advanced than the Hutu.

To this day, the government is controlled by the Hutu, but the military by the Tutsi. And since the latter have never looked upon the government as legitimate, the Hutu have counterbalanced this by forming their own militia groups. "They argued that the Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda had been fighting for a thousand years," Reed said. "Yes, but they also had a thousand years of peace. People don't just fight because their ancestors fought. There must be new grievances and new incidents that trigger off the resumption of fighting."

However, René Lemarchand, a political scientist who was asked to testify on the massacres of 1972 and 1988, emphasised the deep-seated animosity that underlies much of the fighting today. "Memories of the 1972 and 1988 killings will persist for generations, and so will the mutual fears and hatreds they have instilled in the minds of Burundi," he said.

The Amnesty International 1995 report on Burundi claims that "the human rights situation in Burundi is critical" and that the people there "demand justice". It calls upon states to pressure the Burundian government to disclose its human rights records since 1993 and prosecute the aggressors from both ethnic groups. But time is running out. Every 24 hours, 30 people die of ethnic violence in Burundi and the number is rising. It is dispute settlement now or another Rwanda later.

Edited by Gamal Nkrumah

## Nuke-free Africa

Next month, the continent of Africa will declare itself a zone free of nuclear weapons, reports Gamal Ibrahim from Geneva. Can the Middle East follow suit?

The signing ceremony for the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty will be held on 11 April in Cairo. The treaty, negotiated with the support of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) on the basis of principles formulated by the UN General Assembly, is a major achievement in the field of disarmament.

The treaty is also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, the name of the area near Pretoria where the South Africa Atomic Energy Corporation has its headquarters. The Africa Commission on Nuclear Energy which will supervise the implementation of the treaty will also have its headquarters there.

The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (ANWFZ) embraces an entire continent, comprising 53 sovereign states. It will be the third such zone to be established in an inhabited part of the world. The two existing zones covering populated areas encompass Latin America and the Caribbean, under the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco, and the South Pacific, under the 1986 Treaty of Rarotonga.

The African ANWFZ has taken 31 years to come to fruition. By drafting the Pelindaba Treaty under UN auspices, the OAU was in fact satisfying the spirit of an element contained in the 1964 OAU Declaration. The preparation of the treaty has also highlighted the long-standing and mutually beneficial cooperation between the UN and the International Atomic Energy Association in promoting the goals of non-proliferation.

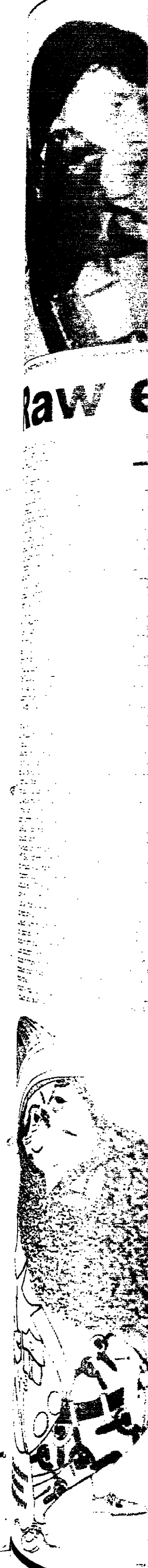
The political importance that the international community attaches to the African ANWFZ was manifest during the UN General Assembly's 50th session. In UN Resolution 50/78 of 12 December 1995, the assembly welcomed the Treaty of Pelindaba with special satisfaction and declared that it considered it "an event of historic significance in the efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to promote international peace and security. It can provide vital lessons for all states wishing to contribute to broadening the areas of the world from which nuclear weapons will be forever proscribed."

The treaty will come into effect immediately after 28 African nations ratify it through their legislatures. J S Selebi, the South African ambassador to Geneva, said that he expected the treaty to be ratified within two years following its signing next month. Selebi said in a Geneva press conference that after the racist apartheid regime was abolished in South Africa, the new government was abolishing nuclear bombs which the country had jointly owned with Israel. He added that South Africa would be conducting peaceful talks behind closed doors with the Israelis to try to convince them to scrap their nuclear arsenal and place their nuclear installations under international supervision as South Africa had done.

Moumiz Zahran, the Egyptian ambassador to the UN in Geneva, said that the African nations would be unwavering in signing the accord since the matter had unanimously been agreed upon in the OAU. Zahran added in a press conference that an invitation had been extended to the foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to attend the Cairo signing ceremony. The five nations — also the world's nuclear powers — will sign two protocols appended to the treaty.

The first protocol states that each party to the protocol undertakes not to use or threaten to use a nuclear explosive device against any party to the treaty or any territory within the African ANWFZ. The second protocol includes the statement that each protocol party undertakes not to test or assist or encourage the testing of any nuclear explosive device anywhere within the African ANWFZ. Zahran affirmed in Geneva his belief that the five big nuclear powers would sign both protocols because they had not expressed any opposition to them during discussions on the subject.

The establishment of the African ANWFZ raises many questions about the possibility of setting up a similar zone in the Middle East. How far would Israel, for example, commit itself to the regulations of this treaty? Would it agree not to threaten any African nation with its nuclear arsenal and not to help any country on the continent produce nuclear weapons in violation of the treaty?





Chechen warriors with their weapons stand waiting at a window of a house in the Zavodskoy district of Grozny. Chechen detachments still carry on their combat action against Russian troops (photo: AFP)

## Raw edge to Russian rule

Is Chechnya the Russian Federation's bad apple? Is there some kind of animus against ethnic and religious minorities in Russia today? The Bolsheviks were ousted in 1991, but the babushkas still cannot afford to buy bananas in 1996. Who is to blame? Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the new brand of criminal capitalists or the breakaway ethnic republics?

"Citizens have borne the brunt of Moscow's war against Chechnya's bid for independence. Women, the aged and children constitute the bulk of the victims of the Kremlin's 14-month war to thwart Chechen aspirations," said Ruslan Khasbulatov, a Chechen who once headed the now-defunct Supreme Soviet.

Chechnya is not the only autonomous republic of the Russian Federation that dreams of independence from Moscow. There are other non-Russian ethnic regions and republics strapped within the confines of the Russian Federation with simmering ethnic tensions and flights of fancy about escaping Moscow's stranglehold. The Russian Federation includes 21 ethnically based autonomous republics and 68 autonomous regions and territories seething with social and political discontent.

Chechnya is no bad apple. Most ethnic republics want to redefine their autonomous status. Bashkortostan, a largely Muslim autonomous region, craves greater control of its oil resources. Neighbouring Tatarstan, a predominantly Muslim, and oil-rich part of the Russian Federation reserved for the Tatar descendants of Gen. Khazrat Khan who ruled Russia for four centuries, is pressing for a more independent and clearer form of autonomous membership in the Russian Federation.

Why should they stop shaking the Russian tree when more and more fruit keep falling off? But then the Russian Federation is not exactly a tree but an orchard of many different co-ethnic ethnic groups and nationalities. The question is: can the trees survive if they are uprooted and thrown out of the orchard? The ethnic autonomous republics and regions are mainly landlocked, some are resource-rich, but most are sparsely populated backwaters. They are economically dependent on Moscow. There might very well be a very bitter aftertaste if they ever get a real taste of independence, but that is a price many are prepared to risk.

Khasbulatov has a paradoxical persona. He is as much an academic as a politician.

It is impossible to underestimate the complexity of any Russian government task, but a new framework for governing Russia is long overdue, warned Ruslan Khasbulatov when he spoke to **Gamal Nkrumah**

He is a rare breed: a Muslim Chechen who headed the highest legislative body of a predominantly Orthodox Christian and Marxist Russian nation at a most trying time in Russia's turbulent history. Khasbulatov is an economist who now writes essentially about politics. He authored over 25 books, ranging from economic textbooks to collections of political essays, and his greatest and best known works, *The Russian Tragedy* and *The Kremlin and the Chechen War*, took Russia by storm. The latter could be considered a testament to his loss of faith in the Russian political system as it stands today and a declaration of war against the country's political establishment. The book is also an affirmation of Khasbulatov's allegiance to the Chechen national cause.

A pipe — his constant companion — held tightly in determined thin lips and his fiery eyes cut a rather dashing figure out of an otherwise physically nondescript and diminutive man. This was his second visit to Cairo; his first was in 1992. He was in Cairo to lobby Arab support for the Chechen cause. "Yeltsin, Clinton and Kohl are incapable of leading the world. Today, we live in a less just world," he said. "Stalin forcefully removed the Chechens to Siberia. Yeltsin is now wiping out the Chechen nation in their own motherland," Khasbulatov said bitterly.

He is head of the International Economic Relations Department of the prestigious Russian Academy of Economics. His rise to power was as rapid as his demise. In 1989 Khasbulatov was elected as a member of the Russian Supreme Soviet and, two years later, was elected as President of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. He was deposed in October 1993 when Yeltsin ordered the bombardment of the Russian parliament. Soon after, Khasbulatov was incarcerated only to be released on 23 February 1994. Khasbulatov was a newcomer to the Russian political arena and had no experience in the State Duma — the lower house of the Russian parliament.

The Group of Seven industrialised nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are reluctant to bail Russia out. "But they do, regardless

of political instability and economic mismanagement," Khasbulatov said.

Russia's sizeable disposable bomb-grade uranium stocks remain a bone of contention with the West. Last year, and against vociferous American protest, Russia's Nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov signed a hard currency-debt deal with Iran to supply nuclear power plants to the Islamic republic. In a desperate bid to keep Mikhailov's enriched uranium reserves off the international market, the United States was obliged to purchase 500 tons of Russia's deadly wares for \$12 billion. Washington also offered to cover the costs of developing less lethal alternative fuels for Russia and getting rid of the radioactive spent fuel.

One of Russia's finest and most revered cathedrals was recently rebuilt and rededicated thanks to Yeltsin's intervention. Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexei's blessings and the 50kg of gold ingots supplied by one of the newly established, privately owned financial houses, Stolichny Bank. "In the aftermath of the collapse of the former Soviet Union, there is an urgent need to glorify the resplendence of Russia's rich architectural heritage. Russia desperately needs tangible reminders of its glorious past and its place as a world power," Khasbulatov said.

The Russian Orthodox Church is undergoing a revival after seven decades of communist rule. The country's churches were in a state of neglect and disrepair. And their rehabilitation is part of Yeltsin's drive to reconstruct Russia and obliterate the communist legacy. Recently Russian craftsmen meticulously laid the finishing touches of gold leaf on the dome of Moscow's Cathedral of the Holy Saviour, demolished by Joseph Stalin in 1931. The cathedral was restored to something of its original splendour at the insistence of Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, at a cost of \$24 million. The problem is that Russia's ethnic minorities are getting worried about the chauvinism of contemporary Russian nationalism.

Is Russia an economy half way into the abyss? Viktor Ilyukhin, chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Security, warned at a parliament hearing recently that Russia's 2,500 tons of gold reserves

inherited from the former Soviet Union have plummeted to an all-time low of 115 tons today. The outflow was a staggering 900 tons in the past couple of years.

Five years of painstaking work by political and economic reformers have done little for the long-suffering Russian masses, whose standard of living deteriorated sharply with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian currency, the ruble, has been devalued some 9,000 times since the fall of the former Soviet Union. To exonerate the Russian leadership from the crimes committed under the cover of privatisation, economic liberalisation and deregulation, Yeltsin has promised that his economic reforms will attract foreign investment.

Khasbulatov predicted that Yeltsin would emerge victorious by a slim margin in the June elections. "He is strongly backed by the West," he stressed. But surely, Yeltsin is not too big for the Russian people to oust? "Even a man of his size seems exorbitantly large by Russian standards," Khasbulatov joked. He went on to expand on this theme. "The Yeltsin regime facilitates the welcome of foreign multinationals in Russia. They eye Russia's vast mineral riches. The extractive industries and the petroleum sector of the Russian economy are the ones least affected by the economic collapse."

He spoke at great length on the tragedy of Chechnya. "I estimate total Chechen losses at some \$25 billion. The cost of the war to Russia is in the range of \$15 billion," Khasbulatov said. "The West is funding the war in Chechnya. The International Monetary Fund has provided Russia with about \$5 billion so far. And \$10 billion is on its way." But has the Arab and Muslim world done enough to assist the Chechens? There was a long pause. He did not find it expedient to elaborate on that point.

Khasbulatov was cynical about rumours of Russia's widely publicised demilitarisation process. Russia exported \$3 billion worth of arms in 1995 — a rise of over 80 per cent on 1994 sales. Russia's Defence Minister Pavel Grachev disclosed last week that Russia makes some \$2 billion profit annually from its sales of nuclear technology.

Would he fight for a Chechen niche in the Russian parliament in the forthcoming general elections? "I have been invited to take part in the elections in June, but I am concentrating on my work as head of the International Committee for Preventing War and Spreading Peace in the Chechen Republic," he said.

So is Khasbulatov a potential Schevardnadze? A categorical "no" was his answer. "I do not think I play the same political role as Schevardnadze, but I will rise to the occasion if called upon by my people," Khasbulatov said. The civil war in Georgia is very different from the conflict in Chechnya.

"Chechnya is Russia's Vietnam. On the very day that the Hamas bomb went off in Jerusalem killing 20 Israelis, the Russians were butchering 350 unarmed villagers," Khasbulatov noted bitterly. The international media focussed on Israel, and the Israeli incident hit the headlines. But, the butchered Chechen villagers were relegated to the back pages — that is if they featured at all. "We have lost some 55,000 lives in Chechnya. Most of the fallen are civilians," he caustically remarked.

"Russians no longer vote resoundingly against the Communists," Khasbulatov mused. But he had no good word to say for Communist Party presidential candidate, Gennady Zyuganov. Zyuganov has one of the best chances of any presidential hopeful — he has a comfortable lead in opinion polls.

Khasbulatov was not forthcoming on the subject of Dzhokhar Dudayev, who led Chechnya's independence bid in December. "Let us first have peace, and then we can discuss the local Chechen political scene. I am not bothered with the setting of scores," he said wryly.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov last week signed the Council of Europe's 1950 European Human Rights Convention and agreements banning torture, protecting minority rights and ensuring local self-government. Russia champions the creation of "a state which would effectively ensure human rights and guarantee the rule of law," he said. Last year, the council suspended Russia's accession talks to the pan-European body because of Moscow's crackdown on Chechen separatists. Today, Russian citizens, including the Chechens and other ethnic minorities, are able to challenge Russian authorities in the European Court of Human Rights.

## Rafsanjani loses Rafsanjan

While Islamic conservatives make a strong showing in rural Iran, voters in the urban centres are less impressed with the country's current rulers, writes **Sayed Awad**

Over 30 million Iranians are voting in general elections that started on 8 March. Iranians over 15 years of age are choosing from 3,232 candidates contesting 270 seats in parliament. There are five seats reserved for the religious minorities — the Christian Assyrians, Jews and Zoroastrians.

By all accounts participation in the elections was far higher than in previous elections. Men and women stood in separate queues to cast their votes. Over 30,000 "supervisors" were dispatched to the 30,000 polling stations in 196 constituencies around the country. Some 270,000 policemen were mobilised nationwide to quell any violence or disturbances.

Interior Minister Ali Mohamad Besharati noted last week that the complexity of voting in "large cities" was bound to delay election results for a few days. Besharati's remarks left the door wide open for speculation about the fairness of the results and opposition fears concerning vote rigging.

Iran's supreme religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani are at loggerheads. They represent two competing ideological strands. While Khamenei is a self-confessed hard-liner, Rafsanjani is widely regarded as a pragmatist. Even though the Iranian constitution allows for the formation of different political parties, no parties as such exist.

The Council of Guardians, Iran's main Islamic guidance committee, disqualified 40 per cent of the prospective candidates. The Servants of Construction group that backs President Rafsanjani is pitted against the conservative candidates who support Khamenei. Chief among the conservative groups are the Party of God and the Revolutionary Guards.

The conservatives won a decisive victory in the last parliamentary elections in 1992. They appeared to be making headway in the current election on the basis of partial returns. The conservatives have done exceptionally well in rural constituencies and in provincial towns. They won the two seats of the Shi'ite Holy City of Qom in Central Iran, the Sunni Muslim stronghold of Zahedan and even captured the seat for Rafsanjan — President Rafsanjani's own hometown. Of the total votes counted for 100 seats, the conservative candidates captured 25. All the other factions combined won 40 seats while the rest were left undecided and will go to a run-off election on 20 April.

Today, there is widespread discontent about economic conditions. Iran is dependent on oil exports for 80 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings. Inflation is running at around 50 per cent and unemployment hovers around 50 per cent. Iran's foreign debt stands at \$32 billion, and it is estimated that no less than 70 per cent of Iran's population of 60 million live below the poverty line. Moreover, an estimated five million Iranians are homeless. It is for this reason that the economy is the focus of the candidates.

## From Russia with bargains

Last week's Arab Russian Congress in Cairo aimed at boosting faltering trade links between partners, reports **Mariz Tadros** who attended

Volatile is one way of describing the economic relations between Moscow and Cairo in the last decade. Yet the last few months have witnessed initiatives from both parties towards economic rapprochement. The Russian and Egyptian governments have repeatedly referred to the political, military, cultural and, especially, economic links that existed between the two countries in the 1950s and 1960s as the groundwork for a new age of economic cooperation.

Ahmed El-Gowelli, minister of supply and trade and representative of the prime minister at the Second Arab Russian Congress which took place in Cairo last week, asserted in his opening speech that bilateral trade between Egypt and Russia "does not reflect its actual potential". The minister noted that the average annual trade figure between the two countries from 1992 to 1995 was less than \$350 million. Bilateral trade had dropped to 30 per cent of its 1991 level by the end of 1995. He said that the steep plunge was "due to the political and economic changes" that have gripped Russia, but he hoped that a new era of economic cooperation would follow "this period of stagnation".

Efforts to boost trade in recent years have been unfruitful. In 1987 an agreement was reached on Egypt's military debts to Russia, a source of friction between the two governments. Trade was then expected to rise. Yet by 1991 there were serious discrepancies in the balance of trade. The Soviet Union could not meet its obligations under the 1991 Trade Protocol with Egypt — a barter exchange agreement mainly between state firms worth \$700 million. Egypt's exports to Russia include cotton, leather products, food products, furniture and clothes, while Russia sells Egypt pig iron, wood and paper products, heavy machinery and coal.

Under the protocol, the Soviet Union was to provide Egypt with 500,000 tons of coal, but delivered only a little over 200,000. The strikes in Siberian mines meant there was not enough coal for Soviet industries, let alone for export purposes. Other requirements in the protocol were also not met.

Concurrently, many private Egyptian companies suddenly found themselves in a state of

confusion, not knowing who they were supposed to negotiate with, as the Soviet Union fragmented into different leaderships. In 1993 the First Arab-Russian Congress was held in Moscow in an attempt to boost Russian-Arab and especially Russian-Egyptian trade. But political and economic instability discouraged many Egyptian traders from venturing into Russian markets.

Professor Alexei Vasiliev, director of the Institute of Africa at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, emphasised at the congress that the Russian and Egyptian economies are "very much complementary, not in all fields, but in the most important ones". He added, "Despite the Arab and Egyptian businessmen's complaints about the danger of trade in Russia because of all the crimes, I say to you come and do business with the Russians. If you're late, your place will be taken." The same warning was given by Ibrahim Reda Shehata, the Egyptian ambassador to Moscow, who told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that although "Egypt is the gateway to the Middle East", Russia continues to import from other Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria and Tunisia. He said that Russian trade with Egypt was a drop in the ocean compared to that with Germany, Italy, France, Greece, Turkey and Israel. Russia's total annual trade figure with Turkey stood at \$6 billion last year, while that with Israel amounted to \$300 million.

Even today, trade with Russia involves high risks. Egyptian businessmen at the congress complained that the threat of mafia groups vandalising Russian products before they leave the shores to Egypt and Egyptian products upon arrival in Russia was very real. They also claimed that there was inadequate information on the nature and needs of Russian markets. Hassanain Sheida, the general export manager for an Egyptian pharmaceutical company, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "We don't know enough about their markets, what Egyptian products would be competitive there, and what the prices, quantities and types of medicine are like."

Russian businessmen visiting Cairo seemed more confident of the potential for import-export and joint-investment ventures in Egypt.

By the end of the week, Bolotnikov Gregory, director of the Vacuum-Plasma Technology Company, had made a deal with the Tabbin Institute of Metallurgical Studies in Cairo in a joint project that involves Russian installation of laboratory equipment at the Tabbin Institute. Gregory told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that even though he has business links in Syria and Kuwait, his ties with Egypt are the most important. "We know Egyptians, Egyptians know us," he said.

Evgeny Romasenko, deputy chief of Npo Energomash, an electronics, communications, construction and tourism business with profits of \$270 million in 1995, told the *Weekly* that his firm was looking for partners for joint investment projects in Egypt. Romasenko said that Russian tourism in Egypt has been largely ignored, but that its potential is enormous. "We did a series of surveys in Egypt last year and found out that in Hurgada a large percentage of tourists are Russian," he said. "The number of Egyptians who know Russian there is very high as well. There is definitely a market for it."

Moumir Hassan Khalil, general manager of the Association of Egyptian Banks, explained to the *Weekly* that the hesitancy of Egyptian businessmen to take high risks in Russia is understandable since "a relationship of mutual trust between Egyptian and Russian businessmen has not yet been fully developed". According to Khalil, economic ties cannot be expected to be of the same nature and intensity as those existing in the 1950s and 1960s when military ties and obligations resulted in a notable Russian heavy industrial presence in Egypt.

Khalil believes that many Egyptian companies and investors now fear that their import-export transactions will collapse because there are no guarantees for their money. "The political fragmentation and economic chaos that gripped the Soviet Union made economic negotiations difficult," he said. "Even the banks there refused to give any guarantees on the exports from Egypt. A joint Russian-Egyptian bank was suggested as a way of securing economic transactions between the two states."

Sharkawy Hefni, commercial counsellor at the Commercial Representation of the Egyptian Ministry of Supply and Trade, told the *Weekly*

that by the end of the four-day congress, Egyptian and Russian officials had agreed to establish an Arab-Russian bank to regulate commercial and monetary transactions between the public and private sectors in both countries. In addition, an agreement was reached between the Egyptian Company for Export Guarantee and its Russian counterpart, Ingostar, to insure up to 80 per cent of the price of export products and freight expenses between the two countries. This was the first time the Russian government had consented to act as a guarantor of export goods. It was also agreed that an Arab-Russian Chamber of Commerce would be set up in Moscow to revive trade between Russia and the Arab world.

Another big obstacle to Russian-Arab commercial interaction, according to Hefni, is the transport of goods to and from the Russian Federation. He said that the Egyptian government would be issuing new regulations that will allow Russian merchants to carry 500kg of luggage with them when leaving Egypt. This is less costly than the price of a cargo container and minimises the risks of profit loss. "This way Egyptian products will be available on the Russian markets and it will enable us to compete with other Arab countries for market space in Russia," explained Hefni. "I see the establishment of a secretariat to supervise the implementation of the recommendations presented at this congress and secure the continuation of trade talks as the most important new development. The first Moscow congress of 1991 was unsuccessful because there was no follow-up to it. We had to start off all over again this time."

The most striking feature of the congress was that despite the nostalgic recollections of the ties that bound the two states together in the 1950s and '60s, this encounter was not so much about economic reconciliation as economic building. No longer were two centrally planned states meeting to negotiate economic deals with an underlying political and military agenda. This time, with a liberalised attitude to capital and foreign investment, both Russian and Egyptian businessmen were starting all over again.

The Third Arab Russian Congress will be held in 1997 in the Moscow region.



Chechen  
Salman  
Raduyev

## Al-Ahram Weekly

### A spirit of peace

In a recent speech on the threat posed by states either harbouring or condoning terrorism, Margaret Thatcher said, "We have run down our defences and relaxed our guard." Her solution to this is to increase the arsenal of missiles so as to retaliate against "rogue states".

Thatcher's statements almost coincided with the Sharm El-Sheikh summit of the peacemakers, where 20 world leaders met to salvage the peace process and discuss anti-terrorism measures. From the start, however, the spirit of comments like Thatcher's could threaten to divert the results of the summit onto dangerous ground. The real issue at hand is peace and reconciliation. Terrorism, though significant, is but a side issue that will be dealt with as the peace process moves along and the parties involved accrue gains deemed fair to all sides. Peacemaking is not achieved by building up an arsenal, forming multinational security forces or by nullifying "rogue" states. It is a procedure best secured through patient, diligent, constructive dialogue and initiatives, unhindered by obstructions and intransigence, bolstered by the realisation that peace is its own reward.

What was clear even before the summit, however, was that while peace was decidedly a priority, other issues came into play such as elections, re-elections or appealing right-wing elements within different countries. Consequently, the peace process fell victim to hidden agendas, as did the rights of the Palestinians in the self-rule areas.

This summit comes at a precarious time when security issues threaten to cloud the overall thrust of the peace process. While it is important to address these concerns, it is more important to keep them within a framework compatible with that of the drive for peace. As such, the outcome of the summit should be used to add to the gains already accrued — promoting peace, the rights of the Palestinians and the future stability of the region. It is not, however, a call to arms over another "iron curtain". Peace cannot be built through a spirit of war.

The attendance of so many world leaders at the summit in Sharm El-Sheikh testifies to the crucial position Egypt occupies regionally, by virtue of its geographical, historical, cultural and demographic density.

Certainly there can be little doubting the fact that Egypt's regional role has been thrown into greater relief in the wake of the recent suicide attacks in Israel, attacks that threatened to derail the peace process and throw the entire region into turmoil. Following the attacks it became imperative to rebuild confidence and a sense of trust among all the parties involved in negotiating the obstacles that stand in the way of peace. And Egypt responded to the demands of the moment by calling for a conference of peace makers.

The response was overwhelming. Such is the international recognition of the important role that Egypt has to play regionally that the organisers of the summit were forced to place a limit on the numbers of participating delegations.

Some foreign policy analysts have noted Egypt's recent reticence to become involved in regional disputes such as those between Qatar and Bahrain, Eritrea and Yemen, and Morocco and Algeria. Indeed,

**Ibrahim Nafie** argues that Egypt's hosting of the Sharm El-Sheikh summit is a continuation of its unswerving dedication to peace and stability

Egyptian foreign policy has been geared towards avoiding involvement in such regional disputes, except where it could lend a hand in promoting peaceful and satisfactory settlements. As a consequence, Egypt, while no player in the disputes listed above, was heavily involved in such crucial events as the liberation of Kuwait, discussions over the perpetuation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and is now expending great energies in rescuing the peace process and combating terrorism.

This should come as no surprise. Peace, after all, is an essential precondition if Egypt, along with other countries in the region, is to ensure a better life for future generations. Terrorism, of which Egypt has had more than its fair share of experience, erodes the possibility of stability and growth that are the basis of our development project.

That project, along with the entire peace process, has been jeopardised by the events of the last two weeks. And the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, in short, constitutes an attempt to rescue this hoped for future. The summit, by underlining the importance of Egypt's regional role, provides an answer to those commentators who, over the last twelve months or so, have continuously harped on about Egypt's diminishing regional role. Egypt's strategic weight has once more been shown to be a permanent reality. Egypt's regional significance is not to be held hostage to fluctuating

events and ephemeral shifts in the balance of power.

This is not to say that our foreign policy should be in any way rigid or cast in tablets of stone. Of course, it must accommodate itself to a changing situation. But those who view such accommodation as evidence of a dwindling regional role are sadly mistaken.

Such a mistaken view has, more often than not, been caused by the inability of commentators to comprehend the new style with which the Egyptian leadership is managing its regional relations. Under President Mubarak Egypt's foreign policy has consistently focused on establishing the conditions which will ensure economic development. The accent has been on domestic and regional stability, and therefore peace. These are the ends towards which Egypt's leadership has consistently strived. It has refused to be diverted from its strategy by becoming embroiled in side-issues that would dissipate the resources and energies of the population.

The events of the last two weeks have once again exposed the importance of the regional role which Egypt has to play. The attending summit in Sharm El-Sheikh has, at last, acknowledged this role, and reaffirmed the centrality of Egypt.

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# Back on the peace track



## After Sharm El-Sheikh

**Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** discusses the rationale of the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, and questions whether it fulfils the conditions for a resumption of the peace process

It seems that whenever the post-bipolar world order reaches a critical point, the Middle East becomes the focal point of world attention. The first event which prompted global mobilisation shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union was Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. The second was the recent spate of terrorism unleashed by Hamas on Israel, which threatens to torpedo the entire peace process. The summit of world leaders held yesterday in Sharm El-Sheikh symbolises the unanimous condemnation of terrorism at the summit of the international community, exactly as the unanimous decision taken by the UN Security Council against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait symbolised a similar global consensus.

It can be argued that what prompted world leaders to close ranks against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait six years ago was the threat this posed to the world's main oil reservoirs in the Gulf rather than the violation it represented to a UN member state's sovereignty, because many other member states were exposed to similar violations without provoking similar reactions. It can also be argued that what is bringing world leaders together today is a death toll of sixty-one Israelis, while the same leaders did not contemplate collective action when faced with the death of scores of civilians in Rwanda and Burundi. Be that as it may, the fact is that Iraq was caught red-handed violating the sovereignty of an independent state, and that Hamas did not hesitate to claim responsibility for terrorist acts which are classified as no less serious a crime.

While the main message conveyed by yesterday's summit is that terrorism will not be allowed to impose a veto on the peace process, and that their attempt to "kill" peace will not be accepted as a failure, this does not mean that many of the par-

ticipants do not have their own undeclared agendas. There is no doubt, for example, that Clinton's enthusiastic endorsement of the summit will boost his popularity just as the Gulf War boosted Bush's and the Falkland campaign Thatcher's, thus bolstering his chances of reelection next November. Nor is there any doubt that the American administration is backing Peres in the upcoming Israeli elections against his main opponent, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who is opposed to the current peace process, and who, according to opinion polls conducted after the recent terrorist attacks in Israel, now enjoys the support of more than 50 per cent of the electorate. Washington is also keen on demonstrating to Arafat that he can count on its full support as long as he does not talk at clamping down on Hamas.

The summit was also useful as a means of testing Syria's intentions. While reiterating his support for peace, as demonstrated by Syria's participation in the Madrid conference, Assad has so far refused to meet Peres. He has also refused to condemn terrorism as long as a clear definition of peace has not been reached. President Clinton had every interest in drawing Syria into a summit whose agenda included condemning its friend, Iran, as the mainstay of global terrorism, a country Peres described as "the centre of terrorism, the centre of fundamentalism, the centre of subversion... more dangerous than Nazism, because Hitler did not have nuclear weapons."

Actually, the summit promoted a new definition of terrorism, identifying it as the most salient expression of war in the post-bipolar world, where regular armies have become largely redundant. Terrorism has become widespread because classical warfare is no longer possible in a planet that is gradually being transformed into a global village. Terror-

ism is warfare not conducted by legitimate authorities but by forces emanating from within — or outside — a given society, whether acting in the open or secretly. Thus terrorist acts within any state can be orchestrated from outside that state, thanks to a close-knit alliance of forces actively engaged in the training and funding of terrorist groups, in the mobilisation of recruits willing to lay down their lives for a cause and in the planning and execution of terrorist attacks. This alliance operates without regard to, indeed, often at cross-purposes with, the geopolitical map of any given region. In that sense, Hamas and Hezbollah can be a cover for certain states which are in fact responsible for the recent suicide bombing campaign.

It was also hoped that the summit would strengthen Arafat's resolve and encourage him to clamp down more harshly on militant extremists. But enforcing Arafat's hand in this way could be counterproductive, as greater repression could ignite a Palestinian civil war with devastating consequences for an already divided, not to say fragmented, Arab world. The lack of a cohesive Arab strategy was highlighted by the far from complete roll call of Arab states at the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, with some attending, some not invited in the first place for their alleged links with terrorism (Iraq, Sudan and Libya), some not represented by their leaders and some staying away altogether. It would seem that the Arab-Israeli peace has sharpened inter-Arab divisions which once operated between the Arabs on one side and the Israelis on the other into Arab ranks. The strains and stresses to which this has exposed the project of pan-Arabism have not been alleviated by requiring the Arabs to come together in a show of support for the incumbent Israeli prime minister, even if the intention

is to bolster his chances of success against his Likud rival.

One aspect of the meeting that cannot be ignored is its endorsement of the anti-Iran stand of the US and Israel, who accuse Tehran of masterminding and bankrolling terrorist activities throughout the region. This endorsement carries an implicit rebuke of the European Union's policy of conducting a "critical dialogue" with Tehran, aimed at preventing the more extreme elements in Iran's power establishment from taking over. At a meeting of European foreign ministers held in Palermo earlier this week, it was decided to send a troika of high-powered EU officials to Iran, Libya and Syria to press these countries to condemn terrorism openly — as well as to reaffirm Europe's commitment to the dialogue it began with Iran in 1992.

Another aspect is that although the summit reflects the repugnance of the international community at terrorism, its main achievement in practical terms has been the creation of an intelligence network to pool resources in the fight against terrorism and the establishment of channels for the exchange of information between the secret services of the countries which have committed themselves to the fight. It is significant in this respect that, just days before the summit, senior CIA officials met for the first time with representatives of the Palestinian national Authority, not just of Mossad, to coordinate efforts against Hamas.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that there can be legitimate reasons to oppose the peace process, and that not all opposition necessarily implies supporting terrorism. As long as the conditions of peace are sharply tilted in favour of one party at the expense of another, there can never be a just peace, and resistance to an unfair peace arrangement, including violent resistance, cannot be condemned a priori.

### The truth of terror

By Naguib Mahfouz

The convening of the Sharm El-Sheikh summit is of particular significance for many reasons. In accepting invitations to attend, the world leaders who travelled to Sharm El-Sheikh endorsed Egypt's own position, which is to do everything in its power to promote the cause of peace. Peace in the region is obviously at the top of the international agenda. The role of the summit in advertising this fact should not be belittled.

The presence of so many world leaders at the summit can serve only to underscore the fact that regional peace is not a matter of local choice, but can only be brought about with the support of the entire international community. It will highlight the importance of adopting a consistent approach to terrorism, and spotlight the anomalies involved in terrorists fleeing from one country only to settle in another under the pretext of political asylum.

Certainly the meeting should provide an arena to dispel the Western misconception that terrorism is restricted solely to matters arising from religious conflicts. Ethnic terrorism is widespread in Europe and the US, while religious terrorism is not confined to Islam but is practiced by followers of other religions, including Jews and Christians. But unfortunately, when referring to terrorism, the Western media has a tendency to use it as a synonym for Islamic fundamentalism.

The Sharm El-Sheikh summit will do a great service if it succeeds in shattering this simple misconception.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salim.

## The Press This Week

By Hassan Fouad

NOT SURPRISINGLY, the main focus of attention of all papers this week was the Sharm El-Sheikh summit conference to boost the peace process and combat terrorism under the joint chairmanship of Presidents Mubarak and Clinton. News of the summit dominated the banner headlines of the papers for the past week.

On Thursday, Al-Ahram's banner headline read: "Mubarak calls for an international conference to confront terrorism." And on Friday, Ibrahim Nafie, editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram, wrote in his weekly front-page column, under the title "Who will stop the machinery of barbaric terrorism which is threatening world peace?" "What has happened in the past few months, from the assassination of Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin to the last four Hamas operations, raises great fears. It has become apparent that extremist forces have the ability to endanger a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. These forces are able to divert peace efforts towards undesirable paths either by using new methods of violence or by directing blows at highly sensitive targets (as with Rabin's assassination), or by escalating violence to previously unimaginable levels (as with the recent Hamas operations).

"As the peace process moved forward, realising tangible achievements, reaching the final stage of bilateral agreements and negotiations over regional arrangements, the anti-peace forces became more determined to impede the peace process, divert it, or even bring it to a complete halt."

"The fact of the matter is that there is not much difference between the Arab and Israeli violence against the Palestinians is seen as a justification for the existence of organisations like Hamas."

On Sunday Galal Dwidar, editor-in-chief of Al-Akhar, wrote a front page article on the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, in which he said: "Despite the fact that the Sharm El-Sheikh conference is a welcome and positive step, the threat of terrorism should not be dealt with in such a way as to transform the conference into a mere demonstration of support for Israel, following the recent wave of suicide operations."

"What is required is that the conference should formulate a unified stand to curtail terrorism and that each nation should shoulder its responsibility in full. The salvaged peace should be comprehensive and just for the entire region and not just Israel."

On the same day Mahfouz El-Aussari, editor-in-chief of Al-Gomhuria, wrote a front-page article entitled: "Mubarak's summit for saving peace — Sharm El-Sheikh is a beginning." He said: "The world has come to understand Mubarak's message and invitation. It has anxiously witnessed the storms of anger and hate sweeping the 'land of peace' and expects waves of

violence and murder and even war, especially after Israel declared a 'state of war' giving itself the right to violate Palestinian sovereignty. The world has seen that all the efforts to keep the peace track open and the peace agreements intact are liable to be destroyed."

On Monday Ibrahim Nafie wrote a second article on the conference under the headline: "The peacemakers conference."

Another topic which the papers focused on was the new draft press law. In his back-page column in Al-Akhar on Friday, Mustafa Anis wrote: "We welcome the new press law but we want to eliminate the loopholes with it so as not to give a chance to the enemies of freedom who want to gag mouths and cut tongues. We notice that the new law lacks an article abolishing the law [93] which assassinates the freedom of the press — the law which provoked public opinion and was denounced by the whole nation."

"While one article cancels preventative detention, another article permits the arrest of journalists and their arraignment for investigation. While one article prohibits censorship, another permits it under the Emergency Law. The meaning of press freedom is

that each citizen should have the right to publish a newspaper and to express his opinion... The press law should be cleansed of stretchable articles."

On the same subject, Salama Ahmed Salama wrote in his daily Al-Ahram column on Saturday: "The positive side of the new draft law overshadows the negative. It shows that great efforts were made in ne-

**'Despite the fact that the Sharm El-Sheikh conference is a welcome step, the threat of terrorism should not be dealt with in such a way as to transform the conference into a mere demonstration of support for Israel'**

Galal Dwidar

gotiating it and points to a 'political compromise' between the journalists and the official committee entrusted with preparing the draft. For the first time a dialogue took place between government agencies and the Press Syndicate to reach a formula acceptable to both sides.

"The new draft law cancelled the preventative detention of journalists but retained imprisonment as a penalty for publication offences. In this it goes against a world trend to cancel prison sentences for crimes of opinion and publication."

The satirical writer Ahmed Ragab wrote in his front-page column in Al-Akhar El-Yom: "The Higher Constitutional Court has decreed that 19 laws were unconstitutional and 85 articles in current laws were also unconstitutional. This puts the legislative authority under the spotlight for not studying draft laws before enacting them. It shows that approval was obtained far too quickly, in the dead of night when everyone, including MPs, were asleep. So that the Constitutional Court does not come out with more rulings that would embarrass the People's Assembly, we suggest that the constitution should be abolished."

In Mawazir magazine Editor-in-Chief Makram Mohamed Ahmed wrote a three-page article entitled: "The library meeting and the press law", in which he linked the new draft press law and President Mubarak's meeting with authors and thinkers at the Great Cairo Library in Zamalek. He wrote: "At the library meeting Mubarak's clear bias for democracy was apparent by urging everyone to freely express their opinions and calling on them to criticise objectively 'because criticism serves the rulers'. Also apparent was his bias for a free press which upholds the nation's interests."

سازمان چاپ

## Close up

Salama A. Salama

## A more solid peace

The main objective of the Sharm El-Sheikh summit had, perhaps, already been achieved before world leaders descended on the southern Sinai resort town. Hamas schools, hospitals and offices have already been closed down, while Hamas activists, particularly those on the CIA's wanted list, have all been detained. In short, Hamas, having shown itself capable of potentially deterring the peace process, has had its wings severely clipped.

Yet the measures against Hamas taken by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) both alone, and in conjunction with Israeli forces, have cost Arafat dearly. Israel's blockade of the West Bank and Gaza has resulted in incredible hardships for the Palestinian population, who face difficulty procuring even enough food to eat.

Yet important questions need to be asked: To what extent have the recent counter measures succeeded in uprooting extremist elements in the Palestinian opposition? And to what extent will it be possible to bring a halt to provocative Israeli special operations, such as the assassinations of Fathi El-Shakaki and Yehia Ayyash, which trigger counter-violence and provide justification for terrorist acts?

The Sharm El-Sheikh summit may have not provided answers to these questions. Its major achievement, however, has been its contribution towards reviving the threatened peace process between the PNA and Israel, though it is unlikely that the summit will result in any concrete progress until after the Israeli elections, except maybe for the amendment of the Palestinian National Charter.

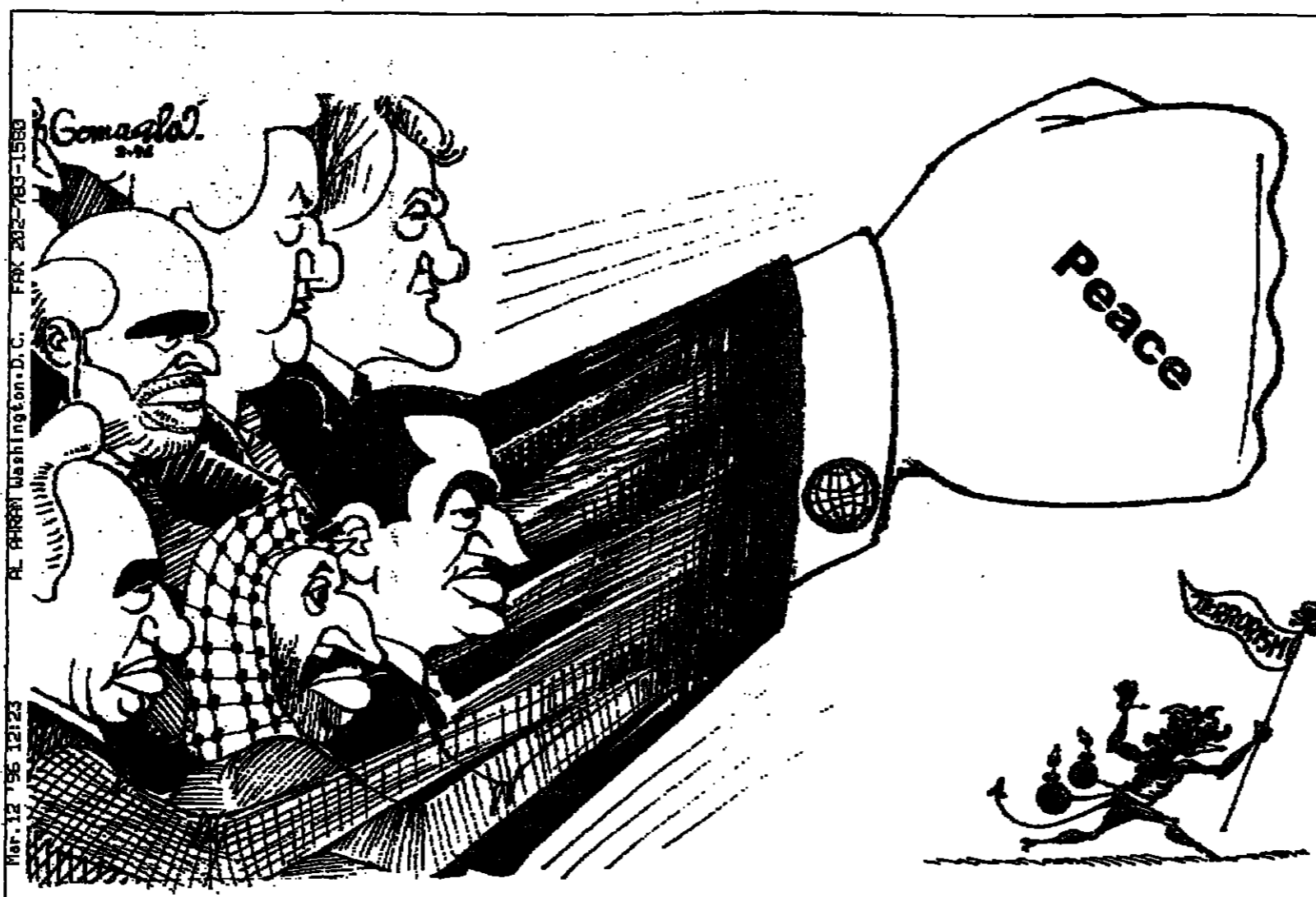
One anticipated result of the summit is an improvement in the Israeli prime minister's electoral standing which plummeted in the wake of the Hamas suicide bombings. It was, indeed, probably concern over Peres's election prospects that prompted President Clinton's sudden visit to Israel, where he attended an Israeli cabinet meeting and thereby marked a new phase in American-Israeli relations.

To constitute a real meeting of peace-makers, the Sharm El-Sheikh summit should by rights have included both Syria and Lebanon, particularly given the fact that acts of violence on the Lebanese borders continued unabated even while the meeting was in session.

Certainly Washington could have taken the initiative in encouraging Syria to attend, issuing an invitation while at the same time removing Syria from its list of states sponsoring terrorism. Reviving Israeli-Syrian negotiations is, after all, part and parcel of consolidating peace and security in the region.

Yet putting such concerns aside, the level of participation at the summit reflects deepening international concern over the danger of destabilising conflicts in the Middle East. Peace is a fragile thing. It can be derailed by a single crisis. Nor is this the first time it has been threatened. Yet what distinguishes the present crisis from earlier ones is that Israel was itself the site of the crisis.

We have been given a salutary reminder of the fragility of peace in the region. And protecting that peace cannot be the sole responsibility of Arafat and the PNA. President Mubarak deserves every credit for exerting such efforts to involve other world leaders in the rescuing of peace.



## Resurrecting the peace

The promise of Middle East peace will not be surrendered. Sharm El-Sheikh showed that fanaticism will not dictate the future, writes **Abdel-Moneim Said**

By the time this issue of *Al-Ahram Weekly* hits the streets, the largest summit ever held in the Middle East for peace making, or otherwise, will have come to an end. Aside from the declarations and media hype, it will be some time before the summit's success or failure will become apparent. The criteria for judging its outcome are no less elusive than the promotion, in fact the resurrection, of the Middle East peace process, and the halting of terrorism in the region, particularly in Israel. Only few weeks ago progress towards peace seemed to be on a rising trajectory. But recent events put paid to that.

Only a few weeks ago, the Middle East seemed like a promising place to live. It was promising to the degree that many Middle East countries started to market themselves internationally for investment and tourism. It was Israel, in particular, that launched a worldwide campaign calling for investors to come to the promised land. The reasons for optimism were well known. The peace process in the Middle East looked successful. Israel and the PLO had come to an agreement in Taba and Washington, and the second stage of the Oslo agreement had been implemented. Town after town greeted Yasser Arafat with a welcoming cheer that culminated in the Palestinian elections, which looked like a serious first step on the road to the long fought-after Palestinian state. For the first time, legitimacy was granted by the people for a process that longed for acceptance. Even the opposition, headed by Hamas, was willing to give the peace process the benefit of the doubt and some of its members crossed over to join in the party.

On the other side of the green line, the Israeli peace camp, headed by Shimon Peres, held a comfortable lead in the approach to the Israeli elections in May. The assassination of Rabin by an Israeli fanatic ironically boosted Peres's position; the right wing party, Likud, was on the defensive and in retreat; and the Israeli-Syrian negotiations were resumed in Wye Plantation, after a long halt. Moreover, the Israeli-Jordanian peace seemed quite warm; and the economic summit in Amman made the vision for a new Middle East seem real, particularly after Cairo decided to host the next economic meeting by the end of the year. All in all, the Middle East seemed to be approaching an era full of the promise not only of peace, but also of economic cooperation. Most promising of all was a document leaked to the press indicating the existence of an Israeli-Palestinian understanding on Palestinian final status, which would grant the Palestinians their statehood.

However, it seems that the rising trajectory for peace and prosperity in the Middle East was strong enough for certain interests to try and stop it, before they were damaged and the ideologies of fundamentalism and fanaticism became obsolete.

In only two weeks, the climate in the area changed so radically that the *London Economist* asked: "Is the Middle East peace process slipping into history?" And the answer was: "It could be." Four Hamas suicide bombings in the heart of Israel claimed 60 lives and sparked a wave of hate culminating in the

Israelis taking up the chant of "death to the Arabs". The rest of the story is by now well known. The PA was blamed and pushed to use undemocratic means to stamp on Hamas's political and military base. Israeli soldiers swarmed into West Bank villages, punishing the families and neighbours of suicide bombers and suspected terrorists alike in a wave of collective punishment. The Likud leadership seemed to be destined for power, with all its consequences for Israel and the region. Opposition to peace in Israel and the Arab world could congregate itself. Seldom had terrorism been more effective.

Yet, it seems also that the peace process in the Middle East is not as fragile as many in the opposition to both sides had imagined. The peace process has created interest in a future much brighter than had been envisaged in the past. The first signal came from Palestine. Palestinian demonstrators took to the streets, for the first time denouncing the "terrorism" of Hamas. For the first time since the creation of Israel, Palestinians had caught a glimpse of freedom and independence; they were not going to surrender those possibilities to violent gangs. Their support for the PA in its bleak times was overwhelming.

And after the great shock, the peace camp in Israel started to comprehend the dire consequences of a new war that could be much nastier than past conflicts. Israeli demonstrators with "peace now" signs went on the streets. Polls again showed a lead for Peres over Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

And the peace camps on both sides were not alone in the region or in the world. It was obvious to regional and world powers that there was a need for a bold step to scramble back to sanity, and to boost the morale of peace supporters in Israel and Palestine. In Egypt and the United States in particular, the stakes were high. Egypt was the country that initiated the peace process when President Sadat made his courageous move to put the Middle East on a new road. It was Egypt that invested heavily in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making. It was Egypt, despite all the claims of the decline of its regional role, which remains the country that can tip the regional balance for peace or war. And this time, Egypt could not accept that the fate of the entire region should be in the hands of fanatical groups. For the United States, the stakes were even higher. Taking the forthcoming presidential election into consideration, the current administration could not waste the hard labour of four previous administrations. Democratic as well as Republican.

So the idea of the Sharm El-Sheikh summit was born, and received massive support. The signal the summit was to give was to show the would-be terrorists of peace that, in the end, they cannot win. They may succeed in a few operations, but they cannot turn the Middle East back from the road to peace. The success of the summit in the long term will depend on its ability to put that signal into operation, and its ability to remain vigilant and avoid complacency. Old habits may die hard in the region, but there is no choice now but to keep moving towards the new future.

## Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

What is Hamas' strategy, and will it succeed? Wrecking the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords seems rather a narrow objective, which, indeed, Hamas appeared close to achieving. But what does this have to do with correcting the grave injustices which these accords have installed as law, to virtually universal approval and celebration? I believe, nothing.

Having said this, however, one cannot dismiss the recent wave of suicide bombings: Jerusalem, Ashkelon, and a week later, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, as a mere exercise in destructive fury. The highly selective euphemism, terrorism, provides an easy solution for the need to explain. It evokes images of mindless and bloodthirsty fanaticism, which among a Western audience, are loaded with a deeply-ingrained, and daily reproduced, racist view of Arabs and Muslims. Hamas violence, in this view, is self-explanatory, inherent in the very nature of the suicide bombers as Arabs and Muslims. A "profound" explanation, deriving from this view, will tend to lecture on the "fundamental" concepts of jihad and martyrdom in Islam, neglecting to mention that similar operations were until a few years ago — and occasionally even now — conducted by both Christian and Muslim fighters of such Marxist Palestinian organisations as the PFLP and the DFLP. Indeed, neglecting to mention that it was none other than the late Wadie Haddad, a Christian and a Marxist with close links to such "intimately" European groups as the German Bader-Meinhold group and the Italian Red Brigade, who established the tradition of Palestinian "terrorism".

A first and starkly obvious level of explanation for the bombings lies in the fact of continuing occupation and national oppression. What is remarkable here is not the lack of evidence, but the insistent blindness of almost everyone in the face of overwhelming evidence. Apartheid, whose presence in South Africa was universally condemned for decades, is being hailed in Palestine as a triumph of peace and understanding between nations. It has been equally remarkable during the past week that in the frenzy of moral indignation following the Hamas operations, the Israeli reaction, billed as "Israel's war against Hamas

terrorism", has evoked little concern for anything but the "peace process".

Western commentators and journalists, who have no hesitation in criticising human rights violations in states' confrontation with Islamist militants in such countries as Egypt and Algeria, did not even seem to recognise the fact that mass administrative detentions, curfews, the arrest of relatives of suspects, the sealing and destruction of homes, involve human rights' issues. No one seemed to notice that, so far as Israel is concerned, there is not even the pretence that the Palestinians are anything but a subject population, with whom the occupation state can do as it pleases, and as its "security" considerations deem necessary.

Only racism can explain this particular blindness, made considerably easier to maintain by the fact that anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian racism helps alleviate a purely Western guilt of a previous and bloody racism, against the Jews. For the Palestinians, this virtually universal blindness to their suffering makes that suffering doubly intense. It creates a psychological climate whereby you either address Israel and the West on their own terms, through the "peace process" discourse, thus conceding that Israelis are much more equal than Palestinians, or you do not address them at all. When the price of Israeli and international sympathy is the denial of one's own human dignity and right to equality, everything else seems equal.

Equally, it sets an ideological climate for such renditions as Hamas and Jihad, whose denial of the other is practically a knee-jerk reaction to that other's incessant denial of Palestinians and Arabs. Israeli and Western responsibility is no solace, however. Armed attacks against civilians, as I noted in my previous column, are immoral whether they are made by the oppressors or the oppressed, and irrespective of the blatant hypocrisy with which world media and governments grade their level of indignation depending on the perpetrator.

But besides their inherent immorality, such attacks imply bad strategic choices, whether they are successful or not. And this brings us to a second level on which Hamas's strategy can be understood. For these are not merely individual acts by desperate, brutalised and hu-

milited men, who, driven by a deep sense of injustice, lash out viciously and indiscriminately against their oppressors. The latter may explain the personal, and bewildering, act of the suicide bomber, but it fails to explain the choices of political leaders who order these acts, and who issue statements claiming responsibility for them. On this level, I believe Hamas' strategy to be cynical in the short term, abhorrent in the long term, and that, in both the short and long terms, it brings the Palestinian people no closer to winning their liberation and fundamental national and human rights.

Wrecking the Oslo Accords, as I pointed out at the outset of this column, cannot be an aim in itself. The criteria for assessment of the bombings, from the perspective of the Palestinian struggle for liberation, is whether wrecking Oslo in this manner brings that struggle closer to fruition. The mechanism Hamas is depending on to destroy Oslo makes the answer to this question patently negative. For it is not the Palestinians who are being called upon to abrogate Oslo, through winning wider rights and powers than are stipulated by the agreement, but the Israelis, and this not through eliciting greater Israeli sympathy for the Palestinian cause, but by strengthening the hand of racism, arrogance and oppression within Israeli society.

I do not believe that Hamas' leaders are so naive as to believe that strengthening the Likud and the extreme Israeli right is tantamount to improving the chances for Palestinian self-determination, especially since there is no question that such acts will equally strengthen the Palestinian people's level of consciousness, organisation and struggle, so as to offset the vicious repression and hatred unleashed against them by Israel. On the contrary, such individual acts of violence tend as a rule to politically disarm an oppressed people, transforming them into helpless and demoralised bystanders, suffering the indiscriminate wrath of the oppressor, without the ability to resist increased repression, not to speak of escalating the struggle. This is even more clear in the case at hand, with the Hamas bombings coming at a time when the majority of Palestinians in the

West Bank were, for better or worse, emitting a collective sigh of relief over the reduction of direct Israeli military oppression.

This, in fact, leads me to the conclusion that wrecking Oslo was not really the main short-term objective of the Hamas leadership in ordering the bombings. Rather, it seems to me, the Hamas leadership is first and foremost concerned with making political cash out of its ability to act the spoiler. They appear to be attempting this in two ways: One, which seemed to be confirmed by last week's statement declaring the Qassam military wing's decision to surrender its arms and explosives to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), is to improve Hamas' bargaining position vis-à-vis the PNA. A big gamble was obviously involved here, and, in view of the massive campaign unleashed against Hamas and the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, it has backfired terribly. For the moment at least, and most likely for some time to come, Arafat will be in no position to deal with Hamas or give it greater space within the power structures of the self-rule territories, but rather the opposite is true.

A longer, and surer, plan seems to have been the creation of a situation wherein the whole Oslo formula is either so grossly violated by Israel as to become redundant, or to collapse through a Likud victory in the coming elections. Oslo, however, is here a necessary victim for the real objective, which is to discredit Arafat and the PNA, to identify them completely with the Israeli occupation and with Israeli repression, even to bring about their downfall, thus creating new and expanded space for Hamas' political and ideological influence in Gaza and the West Bank. The strategy is thus one of using Israeli mechanisms to achieve purely intra-Palestinian objectives. In both cases the Hamas leadership reveals a considerable degree of political cynicism. Not surprising when one recalls that Hamas, after all, was first nurtured by the Israeli occupation authorities with the aim of off-setting the nationalist and leftist trends which set the terms for the Palestinian struggle throughout the 70s.

In the long term, the Hamas project is the flip-side of the Zionist project. It takes Israel at its own word, as an embodiment of Jewish

## Soapbox

## Divergent aims

There could be no more appropriate meeting place for world leaders pursuing the cause of peace than the Sinai resort of Sharm El-Sheikh. For though the choice of the summit's location was made, primarily, with security considerations in mind, those familiar with the history of Sharm El-Sheikh could not fail to agree that its name is inextricably linked with peace.

Sharm El-Sheikh first came to world attention when Gamal Abdel-Nasser banned Israeli ships from passing through the straits of Tiran, triggering the 1967 war. But it was Egyptian-Israeli peace which, over a decade later, transformed this desolate stretch of the Sinai coast into a thriving sea resort.

The haste with which yesterday's summit was convened highlighted the divergent nature of its aims. Some believed its primary objective was to promote Israel's security and provide it with Arab and European backing in liquidating Hamas and diminishing Iran's regional role, while others suspected that the summit was intended to bolster the position of the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres in the polls. It was suggested, also, that the meeting could be being used to improve President Clinton's domestic standing in the forthcoming American elections.

Egypt, though, looked to the summit meeting as an opportunity to salvage the peace process by addressing those obstacles in its path, including the roles played by Hamas's and Iran, and including also Israeli procrastination in the peace process and the severe financial dilemmas faced by the PNA that have so far prevented Palestinians from reaping any of the supposed dividends of peace.

Though it will be some time before we feel the full fall-out of the summit, from such a close perspective it does appear that Israel will be the main beneficiary. We can expect the identity of other beneficiaries to emerge in the next few days.

This week's Soapbox speaker is a senior Al-Ahram columnist.



Salah Montasser

## Picking up the pieces

Rewarding movement towards peace and sanctioning its enemies can still save the peace process, argues **Mona Makram Ebeid**

As heads of state and government mobilised this week to salvage the Arab-Israeli peace process, amidst a wave of anti-peace terrorism and fears of a Likud victory in the forthcoming Israeli elections, many conflicting questions have arisen.

Has Shimon Peres committed the greatest miscalculation in his political career by opting for early elections? Will they spell the end of the peace process? In this case, what will the regional political landscape look like, and what are the possible alternatives to the peace process, should it collapse? Will we then witness a return to the "no war no peace" situation which prevailed before Madrid? Will the rapid deterioration of events lead to a military confrontation between Syria and Israel? Or even worse, will a stalled peace lead to side-effects and civil wars among the advocates of peace? Will the United States be able to take the political initiative and reactivate the "peace alliance" in the region?

It was the bloody events of the past two weeks, further aggravating an already tense situation, which projected these questions onto the region. The new reality indicates that the Middle East peace process is indeed fragile. Any false move, any hostile statement, instantly revives all the old recriminations and threatens the delicate web of negotiations and agreements that together make up the peace process.

Thus, a harsh reality is revealed: in spite of the great hopes engendered by the peace process and its much celebrated achievements, it appears to be at a tragic impasse — not a total collapse, because some aspects of the process are irreversible. But before moving forward, we need first to understand the internal dynamics governing the Israeli and Palestinian societies. We also need to understand their relationship with each other and to recognise that they have entered a new phase. And within this new phase, the dynamic is that of a downward spiral. In this situation, peace itself is the biggest loser.

On the other hand, the pressure imposed on the Palestinians to almost exclusively propel the process forward has made them feel the victims of an asymmetry of power that has marked their entire political history. Today Israelis can travel more freely throughout the region. Their isolation has ended. The number of Arab and Muslim states that recognise Israel has expanded from two to 14. Multilateral talks take place on a regular basis. Yet today Israelis are afraid to walk down the streets of Tel Aviv. The fact is that the foundations of the ed-

ifice of Middle East peace were never completed — in fact they are crumbling.

The problem today is not episodic violence or the dangerous signs of civil conflict. It is that both the Israelis and the Palestinians are weary. They are losing hope that the peace process will ever succeed. That is why the international community must address the needs of both Palestinians and Israelis in an objective manner. By agreeing to meet in Sharm El-Sheikh to buttress the peace process, the international community has indicated that it remains committed to seeing the process through till a final settlement is reached.

Today, the process is distorted to a large extent, because pressure has been imposed from one side. There is a link between the inability of the Palestinian leadership to exercise control and the fact that land and water rights have not been returned to them. There is also a link between the inability of the Palestinian Authority to collect revenues and the fact that impediments to economic development are as real today as they were during the occupation, since free movement is denied to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. When the borders are closed, not only are workers kept out, but goods do not leave or enter the territories.

It is difficult to promote economic development and investment when you are unable to guarantee that you can import or export on any given day and when you cannot get the requisites for development. On the other hand, Israel has a series of real problems as a result of its internal political debate which is currently driven by the right wing. These are the issues that need to be addressed in Sharm El-Sheikh. The process can still be salvaged but it requires the intervention of external parties.

So the role of the United States, the international community, and Egypt, which has played such an integral role in the Middle East peace process, should go beyond a commitment. The international community must provide not only a stronger and clearer vision of the future, but incentives and corrective measures that would indicate that when people move forward there are rewards, and when they move backward, there are sanctions.

The "war for peace" has in fact started, and it helps to recall what the United States cautioned against a few months ago, when it declared to the Syrians and the Israelis that the lack of concrete progress on the Syrian-Israeli track before the end of the year (1995) would render the region open to any eventuality.

## Hamas in the war of civilisations

identity and pits against it an equally religious and no less mythical Muslim identity. Muslims around the world are to be pitted in perpetual war against Jews around the world. A Muslim identity stands in ever-lasting confrontation with a Judeo-Christian identity.

As it happens, the so-called Judeo-Christian world is immensely more powerful than the Muslim world, and likely to remain so for decades to come. Thus the only practical manifestation of this "war of civilisations" will be to set the stage for Islamist take-overs in the Muslim countries themselves. The US, its Western allies and Israel use the heaven-sent "Islamic threat" to flex their muscles, unleash poll-winning punitive campaigns, seal shut the cracks within their own societies and amongst them, and intensify their dominance, military, economic and political, over the Arab and Islamic worlds. The Islamists point and say: "we told you so".

The great paradox in this scenario is that such potential Islamist take-overs will not unleash the "holy war", so dreaded by Western commentators, against Israel and the West. Rather, I have not the slightest doubt, the "two sides", while maintaining their mutual ethnic, cultural and religious antipathies — each affirming the other's dearly-held "identity" — will, eventually, come to do business.

It is merely a scenario. It is not an inevitability. Precluding it will depend, among other things, on the ability of the Palestinians, with their inexhaustible reservoirs of courage and determination, to evolve a strategy that provides a genuine alternative both to capitulationism and to ultimately futile and morally reprehensible exclusionism. Such a strategy, in my view, implies winning the support of large sections of Israelis, through struggle not through capitulation; through a discourse of liberation and not one of "peace processing"; through an assertion of our common humanity, not of our allegedly insurmountable differences and opposition.

Admittedly, all this seems something of a utopian vision at the moment. Not more so, however, than seeking genuine liberation and justice through either the Oslo, or the Hamas, path.



A portrait of Roxanne Shohdi Attiya, late gallery owner and wife of the leftist leader — one among many portraits by photographer Randa Shaath exhibited under the title *Profiles* at the Sony Gallery (see Listings). Most received their first public showing alongside profiles published in *Al-Ahram Weekly*

## Deep blue nightmares

David Blake floats to light

*The Group Indigo; Pascal Gourmand (baritone) Edmond Hurrai (tenor), Frederic Lair (countertenor), Gilles Safaru (tenor), Dominique Godin (piano); Small Hall, Cairo Opera House; 5 March*

Why strip an idol? To see what is underneath. But some idols strip better than others. And you certainly have to be an idol of some sort to stand up to these musical Indigos. Nothing gets sent up by them though everything comes down.

Up on stage there is blackness, a void, a shadow box containing lunatics — four men and a pianist. There is enough light to see their bodies and to afford a full view of their animated demolition job on everything that catches their fancy. And their fancy covers a wide range: Gershwin and the fox-trot, the submarine areas around the *Lindbergh Baby*, dancing on *Me in a Damp Light*, *Being Together with Ritu* and the *Harry Lime* waltz, early Orson in tulle, sapphires and with a gun. One person, *Move Over Big Man*, goes by with a plastic bag full of poisoned lilies. All this is sung. We leave behind the Land of Lilies and Roses to have champagne with *Proud Mary* but without a Beatle in sight. Street style gassed the Beatles, leaving them out in the suburbs. We are almost home now with *Tootsie*, or was it *Totty*, into the belly of the Big, Big, City.

But nothing blue. No visceral dirt. Not a drop of anything left over from the party next door. The Indigos, blue by name, are not so by nature. They are happy-mad, one leg in Bach, another in Sting, with no intent to wound. They are too witty to wound, but delicious. The four men who performed the mayhem are the same height, tall, wiry and severe, in Godfather-black suits. They are a crazy cross-visual history of Al Pacino doing a rumba with Jean Seberg. They have a throw-out gallic grace. Each has a classical background. They perform

in exalted places, in quite other mediums than this one, early Baroque, 18th century songs, festivals of new music and at the Paris Opera.

One of the tenors could have stood in for Nadir in the recent Cairo Opera production of *The Pearl Fishers*. In this show they scream and whine and imitate traffic noises, but it is all backed up by a vocal technique and you hear the words they sing, whether in French, English or New Guinea. They go over all the tops — and then stop.

Everything done had a firm place somewhere in the music establishment. It was prized out like the pips from an over-ripe fruit, freshened up and delivered anew with irony and comment. They are so clever. Best to know your musical geography when you are confronted by them. They deliver a strip festival. The items they do go black and blue, but the light that shines on them is pure white.

*Cairo Symphony Orchestra; Favorites 6: Dukas, L'apprenti sorcier; Schostakovich, Concerto no. 1 for cello and orchestra, op. 107, Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz (soloist); Bizet, La Grande Suite d'Arlesienne (suits 1 and 2); conductor, Gerard Akoka; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 8 March*

Fifty years ago, in 1946, the Humpty Dumpty figure of European music was blown off its wall. Now after half a century, they have still not put him together again. The difficult process is to piece the broken mosaic, tough as the roots of an old oak tree, into a form, new but related to the traditional. A figure is taking shape slowly, cracks and all. Some musicians have the knack of mending Humpty; some not. Gerard Akoka, one of the best musicians to visit Cairo, has it. His visits always bring delight, sadly to a small audience.

Akoka is almost invisible. He comes out before an audience, there's a contact, but nothing intense. The moment he begins to conduct his effect is felt. Whatever it is, he has a way of his own. The big effects are there and he can build tremendous fortissimo. The velocity tones he uses are few, but always the music comes as original. He enjoys a build up into which he puts endless variations. The pieces played seem suspended out of time. Tempo? Speedy and forthright. Nuance? All in tune, followed by quietly integrated items with grace — good night vespers which turned out to be mad scenes.

The Dukas *Sorcerer's Apprentice* was not played for huge build ups, but Akoka had the orchestra soar and sweep in big movements to tell the story of the apprentice and the watery flood he unleashes. Big things occurred, but it was the ending, the soft radiance of the humour and understanding for the entire story which gave out the love Akoka felt for this favorite chestnut.

The showpiece of the evening came next, the *Cello concerto no. 1, op. 107* of Schostakovich. This is one of the peaks of all string concertos, a mysterious thing full of tragedy, dread, doubt, cross-currented by conflicting emotions, some extended for long moments, others breaking off, leaving the listener in the air. Nothing in the four movements ever concludes or actually states. The cello chatters, intones, gossips, meditates, repeats itself, buzzes like a bee, sometimes angry, sometimes resigned, but always on the move. Then it stops, thinking a silence. The time seems an eternity. A little like *Hamlet*, so much to say, so little time to do it in. Technically the instrument has huge difficulties, all of which were negotiated with ease and majesty by Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz. He made an heroic performance which held the audience in a spell, especially during the silences. Akoka kept the entire thing in this rapt hush. This was an achievement. And then came the long, soft third movement.

Cairo is a strange city. So few people there to hear this performance of beauty, shape and atmosphere, one of Schostakovich's most sublime works. This slow movement takes us and the cello where we have never been before — somewhere on the slide, off balance and unknown. This and other pieces by Schostakovich shattered Soviet music and made its creator an object of irritation to a regime not noted for tolerance. He paid the price but we have the piece. Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz and Akoka gave us a gist of the secret, but no more — there is nothing more to give. So it stops like a shudder, suddenly, sliding into the gloom.

Then came two suites which gave some idea of the main incidental music from *La Grande Suite* 1. *Arlesienne*, Bizet's confrontation with yet another unsuccessful libretto. The story has gone but the music stays. Bizetian melodies float about the tunes. Light heart and pleasure everywhere. The concert ended with a long two stried arrangement, a bel canto tune of elegant grandeur over a murmuring bass, introducing another myth into the suite, *Norma*. Bizet died before he could further chastise Verdi and Wagner. Some composer

The Group Indigo

### Art

## A kiss is still a kiss

Nigel Ryan on a theatrical attempt to recreate the moods of pre-war Vienna

There is a story that is often told about the American poet HD, who happened to be in Vienna on that fateful March day in 1938 when Austria was annexed by Germany. She was on her way to attend a performance of *Das Rosenkavalier* at the Staatsoper. The performance was cancelled. And so she tore her ticket into little pieces, intending to mail them to W H Auden and his band of left-wing poets so that they would understand what life was really like under fascism. Whether the story is apocryphal or not is hardly important. What matters is that it is indicative of an attitude, an impression that informs our understanding of the inter-war years.

The two decades between 1918 and 1938 have undergone a tremendous telescoping. Geography, no less than chronology, has been reduced to a mood, and nowhere more so than in central Europe. Vienna,

directed by Sarah Enani and performed at El-Hanager, attempts a distillation of that mood and in doing so engages in the kind of telescoping that is its hallmark.

In some ways Vienna is no more — nor less — than a costume drama. The particular costumes are drawn from the paintings of Gustav Klimt, who was himself dead by 1918. Such anomalies, though, are unimportant. No one in Vienna would be listening to Edith Piaf during the period of the Anschluss. But once again periods, just like countries, can be made to overlap, since what is being created is an ambience.

The minimal set is dominated

by the presence of a screen on which are projected the by now iconic images of secessionist Vienna. Klimt's lovers embrace in the light of poverty. Vienna, too, probably looked different if you could not afford Hoffmann furniture. And so, in front of projections of those Viennese interiors that once upon a time were the epitome of design the young woman asks her partner how much money they have left.

This production draws on many sources. Adapted by the director and cast from a short story by Jean Rhys, it is promiscuous in its use of images. The general, Mustafa Shaaban, who sits spewing chicken over the floor of the cafe in which

the aging dancer, Pascale Chazaleh, reminisces about her past — recollections of Vienna's golden age — is a Neue Sachlichkeit caricature, a memory of the Weimar Republic, just across the border, that is soon to be no more.

Vienna opens with a bowl of irises, suddenly illuminated through a window in the wings. These flowers acquire the status of leitmotif: they are tossed delicately between the two young lovers who, standing on the brink of ruin, are paralysed into inactivity. They can do nothing but carry on as before, desperately fiddling at their particular Rome burns.

Flowers begin and, in some ways, end this play. The final image projected on the screen are the irises that have crept from wings to centre stage. Then comes the crash, the sound of breaking glass and the *crashnachts* has reached the Danube.

## Listings

### EXHIBITIONS

**Farouk Wagdi (Paintings)**  
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St. Mohandessin. Tel 346-3242. Daily exc 10a-11pm-2.30pm & 4pm-5pm. Until 14 March.

**Salah Kasal (Paintings)**  
Al-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 346-0861. Daily 10am-11pm. Until 14 March.  
Robust paintings with more than a hint of nostalgia by one of Egypt's most successful contemporary artists.

**Marilyn Batts (Paintings)**  
Community Services Association, 8/2 Rd 21, Masara. Tel 350-5284. Mon-Wed 10am-5pm. Thurs 10am-5pm. Until 14 March.  
Oils on canvas based on the artist's photographs of women, desert and Upper Egypt.

**The Sudanese Victims of Torture**  
Group  
Ezra Gallery, AUC, Main Campus, Al-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 337-5436. Daily 9am-9pm. Until 14 March.  
Fifty paintings created by the group.

**Rahab Nour (Paintings) & Halim Yacoub (Sculptures)**  
Ezra Gallery, 3 Al-Masara St. Zewail. Tel 340-6293. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 15 March.

**The Tomb of Fay at Saqqara**  
Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, Dr Mohamed Azzam St. Zewail. Tel 340-0076. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 9am-2pm. Until 15 March.  
On the occasion of its 25th anniversary, the institute presents this exhibition of photographs.

**Gamal Abdel-Nasser (Sculptures)**  
Espace Gallery, 1 Al-Sharif St. Downtown. Tel 393-1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-3pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 19 March.

**Group Exhibitions**  
Ezra Gallery, 18 Al-Masara St. Zewail. Tel 340-3349. Daily 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 20 March.  
On display, are the works of 20 contemporary Egyptian artists including Gamal Shafiq, Zaid El-Segini, Saad El-Din El-Sayid, Mohamed El-Sayid, Abdel-Mo'ez and Hany El-Toumy.

**Shawki El-Nasr (Paintings)**  
Musharafa Gallery, 8 Champollion St. Downtown. Tel 378-4494. Daily exc Fri, 11am-5pm. Until 21 March.

**Dieter Schabauer (Paintings)**  
Opera Art Gallery, Opera House, Giza. Tel 342-0598. Daily 10am-1pm & 4.30pm-8.30pm. Until 22 March.

**International Students' Festival**  
Al-Ahram Faculty, Al-Shams University, Heliopolis. Tel 432-9900. Daily 1pm-5pm. Until 22 March.  
General exhibition including books and photographs.

**Renato Guttuso (Graphics)**  
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Shaikh Al-Masara St. Zewail. Tel 340-8791. Daily exc Fri, 10am-3pm & 5pm-8.30pm. Until 27 March.

**Karl Otto Geitz (Lithographs)**  
Gutsche Institute, 3 Al-Shaikh Rihan St. Downtown. Tel 779-479. Daily 9am-1.30pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 27 March.

**Saleh El-Awadi (Paintings)**  
Al-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 340-6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 30 March.

**Bernard Gaillet (Paintings and Photographs)**  
Cairo Art Gallery, 17 Youssouf Al-Qasbi St. Bab Al-Hadid. Tel 393-1741. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-5pm. Until 30 March.

**Christopher Eronowser (Paintings)**  
Ezra Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, Al-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 337-5436. Daily exc Fri, 9am-9pm. 20-30 March.

**Adly Elmaghrabi (Aquarels)**  
Atelier des Arts, 3 Karim Al-Dawlat St. Downtown. Tel 574-6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 6pm-10pm. 16-31 March.

**Wissam Fahmy & Fathi Ahmed (Paintings)**  
Ezra Gallery, 3 Al-Masara St. Zewail. Tel 340-6293. Daily exc Sat, 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-9pm. 20 March-6 April.

**Randa Shaath (Photographs)**  
Sony Gallery, AUC, Main Campus, Al-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 337-5436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 19 April.  
Black and white portraits of outstanding individuals captured through the photographer's lens over the years.

**The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil**  
1 Kufayr Al-Ahmed St. Dokki. Tel 336-2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 4.30pm-7pm.  
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil, including works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet and Rodin.

### FILMS

**Egyptian Women Directors Series**  
Gutsche Institute, 3 Al-Shaikh Rihan St. Downtown. Tel 779-479.  
Le'D Al-Eyal (Children Games), 19 March, 6.30pm.  
Directed by Nabila Lotfi (1990).

**Chayya (Belly-Dance)**, 19 March.  
Directed by Safia Fathi (1993).  
Nessa' Sa'adik (Women Vagabonds), 20 March, 6.30pm.  
Directed by Nadia Hanna (1991).

**Indian Films**  
Indian Cultural Centre, 23 Talaat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 393-3396.  
Bansi Biji, 14 March, 4pm.  
Directed by Pankaj Varna and starring Anubhav Bachchan.  
Jannam Chennam, 18 March, 4pm.  
Directed by and starring Anubhav Bachchan.

**French Films**  
French Cultural Centre, 27 Sabri Abu Al-Husn St. Heliopolis. Tel 411-4924.  
Ma Saison Préférée, 14 March, 7pm.  
Directed by André Téchiné, starring Catherine Deneuve and Daniel Auteuil (1993).  
Le Bachelier, 17 March, 7pm.  
Directed by Francis Girod, starring Koenig Kauter and Jean-Louis Trintignant (1980).  
Baxter, 19 March, 7pm.  
Directed by Jérôme Boivin, starring Lise Dolmar and Jean Mercur (1989).

**Italian Films**  
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Shaikh Al-Masara St. Zewail. Tel 340-8791.  
La Lunga Pista Del 43 (The Long Night of '43), 17 March, 6pm.  
Directed by F. Vancini (1960).  
Il Rossetto (The Lipstick), 19 March, 6pm.  
Directed by Damiano Damiani (1960).  
La Riparatrice (The Reparatrice), 20 March, 6pm.  
Directed by Damiano Damiani (1963).

**Red Beard**  
Japanese Information and Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr Al-Ahli St. Garden City, 14 March, 5pm.  
Directed by Akira Kurosawa (1965).  
The film will be preceded by a lecture by Hiroyuki Kunitake.

**Cinema change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinema.**

**Al-Nam Fi-Ahmed (Sound Asleep)**  
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 575-6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Every 30 min. 10am-11pm. 10 March, 6pm & 9pm. 11 March, 6pm & 9pm. 12 March, 6pm & 9pm. 13 March, 6pm & 9pm. 14 March, 6pm & 9pm. 15 March, 6pm & 9pm. 16 March, 6pm & 9pm. 17 March, 6pm & 9pm. 18 March, 6pm & 9pm. 19 March, 6pm & 9pm. 20 March, 6pm & 9pm. 21 March, 6pm & 9pm. 22 March, 6pm & 9pm. 23 March, 6pm & 9pm. 24 March, 6pm & 9pm. 25 March, 6pm & 9pm. 26 March, 6pm & 9pm. 27 March, 6pm & 9pm. 28 March, 6pm & 9pm. 29 March, 6pm & 9pm. 30 March, 6pm & 9pm. 31 March, 6pm & 9pm.

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### MUSIC

**National Arabic Music Ensemble**  
Main Hall, Opera House, Giza. Tel 342-0598. 14 March, 8pm.  
Conducted by Selim Salah.

**Akhamas Chamber Orchestra**  
Small Hall, Opera House, as above.

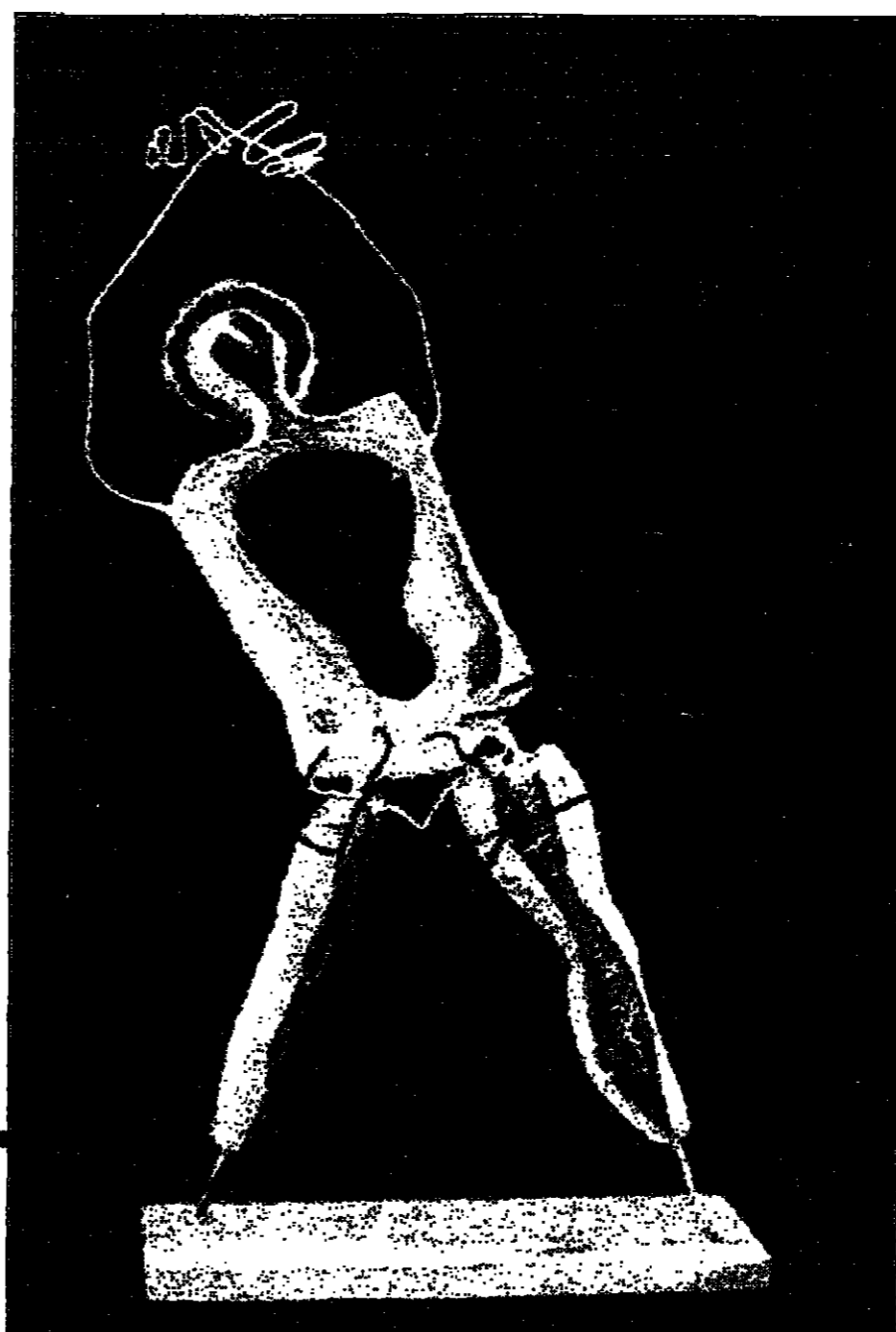
**14 March, 8pm.**  
Mohamed Hany (clarinet) and Peter Luffler (bass), conducted by Sherif Mohabdin, perform Mendelssohn's Concerto for Clarinet and Horn.

**15 March, 8pm.**  
Traditional Greek polyphonic songs.

**Cairo Symphony Orchestra**  
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 16 March, 8pm.  
Performing works by Sousa, Gershwin and Copland, conducted by Charles Ansbacher.

# Happy were the days

Today the exhibition of recent — and some not-so-recent — works by Salah Enani closes at Al-Hanager. Five days later Gamal Abdel-Nasser's exhibition, at Espace, will close. What connections exist between the works of these two artists? Nigel Ryan explores some possibly spurious links



Women are women because they have breasts and painted scarlet mouths. But while Enani's women, left, are at least capable of whispering sweet nothings into the telephone, Gamal Abdel-Nasser's are generally silent. Or else, by dance, spinning round and round, right, less grave than he is excited by their own centre of gravity

"Methods of art-history, just as pictures, can be dated. This is by no means a depreciation of pictures or methods — just a banal historical statement. But the time will naturally come when the exclusive formalists will be recognised as in the rear of art history."

(From *Remarks on the Method of Art History*, Frederick Antal)

Frederick Antal first issued this warning in 1949 and foolhardy is the critic who ignores it. It is, perhaps, the merest paranoia that makes it seem necessary to drop Antal's name in a newspaper article on two contemporary painters whose works are currently showing in Cairo, but whose methods and formal qualities will be touched upon, in this review at least, only tangentially. Name drop, though, I have, largely to justify a concentration on content and context rather than a discussion of light, colour and the application of paint.

It is not that, in the latter areas, there are no connections to be drawn between the current exhibitions of Salah Enani and Gamal Abdel-Nasser. It is simply that the most important connections, or for that matter disconnections, operate on the level of subject matter and the manner in which it is not only assimilated within the art work, but then displayed.

It is not insignificant, when discussing the content of Enani's work, for example, to note that his current exhibition, like all his most recent shows, is being held at Al-Hanager, a large, public exhibition space that falls under the wing of the Ministry of Culture. Nor should one ignore the fact that Gamal Abdel-Nasser's current exhibition is being held at Espace, a small, independent gallery. But it is not simply a question of one being a public, the other a private, show. Both artists, after all, use their gallery space as salesroom. The items in both exhibitions all carry price tags.

Now the irony here cannot be that Enani's art — which is far more commercial, because, on certain levels, it is far more appealing — occupies the public space, while Gamal Abdel-Nasser's sculptures occupy the private space. That would be too simple an equation. Ironies, rather, circulate around the peculiar morphology of the word private and its much in vogue off-spring, privatisation, and what privatisation actually implies when it comes to public space.

On a street level, of course, the implications are clear to all. Privatisation, as development panacea, means

commercial proliferation. It means more products, more services, and consequently more advertising. Wooden seating, litter bins, streetlighting — any and every form of street furniture large enough to carry the name or logo of a sponsor can be pressed into use in a project that appears intent on turning the city into an enormous bill-board.

But how can this affect public exhibition space, space which confers a value it is not necessarily calculated in monetary terms? Her difficulties arise. Public galleries, after all, are expected to deal in quality. They provide a stamp of establishment approval, which — given the history of the modest avant-garde — does not always signify the best investment potential, but which nonetheless, at the time, can be taken as a seal of approval. This is certain the case with galleries that come under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, of a Ministry of Culture that, of course, too, the Ministry of National Guidance.

Enani's paintings, then, can with justification be seen as constituting part of the acceptable face of contemporary artistic practice. Certainly, given the number of red stickers attached to works on the days I visited the show, it is a very popular face. It is not cheap — five figure price tags are far from uncommon — but then the official stamp may well have an inflationary effect, even these days of unrestricted market forces.

It would be churlish to present the success represented by the proliferation of his red dots. And certainly the most successful artists, commercially at least, have always exhibited a degree of business acumen. It is not churlish, though, to point to the ambiguous nature and function of a public gallery that operates as a private sale room and that, in doing so, simultaneously confers a degree of prestige, an therefore enhanced value, on the objects it is selling.

The intention here is to fabricate any inherent opposition between the work of these two artists based on their current choice of galleries. Gamal Abdel-Nasser, in any case, has previously exhibited in the Centre of Arts, Zamalek — another important Ministry of Culture space. Rather, it seems important to point to the qualities in both artists' work that constitute the commercial appeal, or otherwise, of their finished art objects and which might help in clarifying the circumstances, and therefore the significance, of their production.

One walk around the gallery space of Al-Hanager is

enough to show that the paintings hanging on the wall are not the result of close observation. Women are reduced to types — indeed, to one type, moon-faced, big-bodied, with red lips and vacant eyes. This applies equally to those paintings that appear to demand a narrative — that seem, indeed, at times, to be illustrations from a novel — as to those pictures the titles of which would lead the spectator to assume they were examining a portrait.

Enani is a caricaturist, that much is clear. He is a talented caricaturist, as his posters for films such as *Chahine's Alexandria Encore et Toujours* show. But here we have an entire gallery filled with the single caricature of a non-celebrity — the non-specific Egyptian woman. Men fare slightly better, since two, maybe three types, emerge, though the face of the most popular would seem to be that of the Egyptian woman, devoid of makeup. The men, like the big girls they covet, all moon about quite happily, caught in some endlessly optimistic trite.

You will never meet these people because they do not exist. They do not loiter drunkenly, or flirtatiously, over grand pianos, as in *The Party*. They exist purely as a kind of ersatz nostalgia, less an illustration of some half-remembered fictional narrative — they are more removed than that — but rather the extras in an old black and white movie, which might, or might not, be an adaptation of a novel, but which was really seen and consequently experienced as a part of real life.

And the point, I suppose, is that nostalgia sells, especially nostalgia for that pre-*infat* time when telephones were bakelite, girls had cleavages even in the street, courting couples sat on public benches that lacked logos, and privatisation was not a buzz word. The irony is that it is selling now like hot-cakes in a public gallery that for the duration of this show at least, has been well and truly privatised.

Nostalgia rarely deals with anything other than a lost innocence. Whether it is real or not is besides the point. Gamal Abdel-Nasser's nostalgia consists of something a little muddier than painted stills from a black and white film. If Enani's paintings are all intimations of the act to come, then Abdel-Nasser's sculptures, at least some of them, are adolescent fantasies. Both artists go for the obvious signifiers. Women are women because they have breasts and painted scarlet mouths. But while Enani's women are at least capable of whispering sweet nothings into the telephone, Gamal Abdel-Nasser's are

generally silent. They exist only as painted red lips, attached to a wire that protrudes from the top of a square. Their heads consist of no more than a hole, delineated by scarlet lips. And whilst it is true that such images are pornographic, it is the pornography of an unimaginative adolescent. It reeks of scene, and therefore innocence, though only of a sort. True, there are more graphic couplings — marionettes with painted limbs, hooked together — but even these provoke only the raising of an eyebrow, much like a dirty joke overheard from behind the playground wall.

But innocence — even this slightly tarnished version — is not what Gamal Abdel-Nasser does best. Yet, just like Enani, neither is observation. (Just look at the series of boxes pretending to be open windows. Where, in Cairo, have you seen balconies like those? These plain, vertical metal bars through which a spotty adolescent, let alone baby, could slip, simply do not exist.)

Abdel-Nasser's occasionally dirty jokes are always constructed out of plaster, wire, and heavily impasted paint. One wall is lined with a series of unglazed, earthenware plates, thickly painted. On other pieces bits of plastic and fabric are stuck on here and there. It is impossible to guess how these objects will appear in five, let alone 25 years' time. The fabric may well have fallen off, the paint cracked over its earthenware surface, the plaster disintegrated into powder.

This art is for sale, though in ten years' time it may well be unrecognisable. And so Abdel-Nasser undermines considerations of authenticity, jeopardising the authority of the object that he is selling. And this particular joke is at no one's expense, except perhaps the art object's own. But why not condense the attrition of time when you have no tradition to uphold.

What Abdel-Nasser commodifies for the public, in his private gallery, is the impermanence of the present, in all its day-glo, instant image brashness. Computer graphics, squeezed through a toothpaste tube, Salah Enani, in the more sedate, public sector, provides images that suggest a comforting permanence, though they never actually existed at all. Pre-*infat* nostalgia gets the official stamp of approval. The private sector, at least as far as the art market goes, braced by the winds of competition, produces art which, like all the best products of this, the latest, greatest phase of capitalism, has an in-built obsolescence.

## Plain Talk

I have lying on my desk a stack of magazines and periodicals I receive regularly from various embassies and cultural centres in Cairo. Most are in English, French (like the Centre Français de Culture et Coopération's monthly *Le Bulletin*) or Arabic. But a few, like the German *Deutschland*, *Indonesia News* published by the Indonesian Embassy and the Indian *India Perspectives*, are bi-lingual publications.

This is not to mention the dozens of yearbooks, guidebooks, cultural news bulletins, political analyses, national press summaries, among other publications.

One is tempted to say that the information age has brought with it a certain surfeit. Yet, there is no doubt that the sheer profusion of such publications reflects a healthy attitude of nations, and a genuine desire to bridge cultural gaps, one that goes beyond mere publicity. It is also heartening to see that the printed word, in these days of supremacy for the electronic media, still exerts a pull.

Egypt, on her part, has not been negligent in promoting cultural exchange. Indeed, as far back as the late 1940s, the Egyptian Institute in London was publishing *The Bulletin*. A monthly magazine I had the pleasure of editing, it sought to provide as faithful a reflection as possible of life in Egypt. Contributors were generally Egyptians pursuing higher studies in Britain. Their contributions were solicited precisely because they had access to the two cultures and were thus ideal mediators. Furthermore, they could offer informed views on their respective fields of specialisation.

Skimming through the back issues of *The Bulletin*, it strikes me that some very thought-provoking, albeit now dated, articles came out of it. Take the issue of January 1950, for example. Here, alongside articles on Al-Azhar, social welfare by women in Egypt and physical education in schools, is an article entitled "Enterprising Egypt", by one John Jobson.

The writer deals, in the confident tones of the times, with an Egypt which "is still, of course, a wonderful agricultural country, archaeological hunting ground and a tourist paradise, and will continue to be. But it is also becoming industrialised. Where Cleopatra held sway are now the sites of mills and work." Jobson goes on to explain the facilities offered investors and the possible investment opportunities — and that was back in 1950, before the revolution indelibly altered Egypt's agrarian face.

Also in the March issue of the same year is an article on "The Anatomy of Egyptian Industry", a well as one on the Misr Group with as many as 20 companies to its name. It had a capital of seven million pounds — a high figure at the time.

But the *Bulletin* also gave ample space to things cultural. Each issue carried reviews of films, books and plays. Another staple of *The Bulletin* was first rate translations of contemporary Egyptian literary works, accompanied by illustrations. In addition to keeping Egyptians living abroad posted about their country, *The Bulletin*, in its own way, undoubtedly served to promote cultural exchange.

Mursi Saad El-Din

## Books

# Leaving the cocoon

The Fantastic Strokes of Imagination, Emily Nasrallah, tr Rebecca Porteous, Cairo: Elias Modern Publishing House, 1995

An old woman becomes "a basket of bones wrapped in a shroud of wrinkled skin" when she finally sees the truth about herself: a beautiful young woman dances a *dabka* barefoot in the moonlight in her ancestors' village; a little girl who draws lines of fantasy grows into an artist whose "strokes" awaken others; a middle-aged mother struggles to escape from the cocoon that time, others and she herself have woven around her, while another woman of indefinite age watches with fascination as both her body and spirit take the shape first of a seagull and then of a butterfly, to fly at last in liberation — these are the subjects of the five short stories that make up *The Fantastic Strokes of Imagination*, by Lebanese author Emily Nasrallah.

As translator Rebecca Porteous writes in the preface to the collection, the stories "[celebrate] an emerging self-expression in the women they portray". The one exception seems to be the first story "Aunt Latifa" which — unlike the other stories which are taken from *Woman in Seventeen Stories* (1984) — is taken from another collection, *The Lost Windmill* (1985). Anna Latifa's awakening takes her not to freedom or self-questioning, but to a realisation of the horror of war and her own role in it. In a village torn, like the rest of the Lebanon, by civil war, Anna Latifa glories in the status of victor that the war has conferred upon her and lords it over the hapless villagers who are unfortunate enough to belong to the losing side. Her obsession with mastery causes even her family to recoil from her. It is only when the tables are turned and she stares defeat in the eye that she crawls down to the cellar, stares her own self in the eye and dies of self-starvation as a consequence. Dominance and aggression, even when they eventually lead to an awakening and to self-realisation — the story seems to say — ultimately end in destruction.

"Summer Breeze", the second story in the collection, rejoices in the brief return of the mysterious Maxine to her native village.

Her very difference from the other villagers — in name, looks and spirit — act as the catalyst which transforms the village from a sleepy nape of alleyways into a dancing vibrant entity. She gathers the young men of the village around her by moonlight and her voice uplifts their souls when they sing folk songs. She kicks off her shoes and as she dances the traditional Lebanese folk dance the rest of the village wakes up and joins her. She dances alone remaining aloof and independent at the same instant as she is part of the same pulsating whole. Having charmed the villagers, she departs, leaving Al-Joura a changed place. All are more aware of their heritage, which has become a rejuvenating factor in their lives, but more so the young girls. They "begin to go down into the squares and the streets, sharing in the secrets of the earth and the local festivals, dancing the *dabka* at the solo dance until the earth turned with them."

The importance of art as a liberating force becomes the central metaphor in the title story "The Fantastic Strokes of Imagination". Najla's paintings, exhibited in a public square that has been devastated by the war, inspire hope in the crowds that have gathered to watch. But the narrator, Najla's childhood friend who had known these strokes when they were embryonic lines, looks for guidance in them and finds none. "The dabs of colour and hope in the visible distance", but the present remains a street of confusion and darkness. If Najla has reached "heights through her art and imagination, the narrator is still earth-bound, struggling to make sense of her existence."

In the last two stories, "The Cocoon" and "The Butterfly", the women attempt to free their souls and bodies from the downward pull of inhibitions and repressions. The end of "The Cocoon" is deliberately ambiguous, and leaves the reader wondering whether the butterfly slipping from Ibtisam's hand is the daughter who has just gone out, independent, into the world, or

Ibtisam's real self, that had long been wound in a cocoon, finding release at last. There is no such ambiguity in "The Butterfly" whose heroine had also repressed her desires and tamed her body. Suddenly, as she lies heavy on the hot sand, her body acquires a life of its own, independent of her will and soars away in the form of a seagull: once she accepts that the body will not be tamed "she sees her being, the spirit and the body, transforming into a gigantic butterfly."

The stories thus move from death to liberation, from defeat to victory. They also move from the very local to the universal. Though "The Butterfly" is set in Beirut, the woman could have been lying on any beach anywhere in the world. Such a general setting is contrasted by the earlier stories where local colour abounds and details are significant. *Mastabas, dabkas*, olive presses, bulgur wheat, names of villages — these are the elements that shape the destinies of the heroines.

Yet the experiences of these Lebanese women could equally have been experiences of their sisters in any other country. One can even go so far as to say that they are the experiences of the human race, regardless of gender or nationality. The predicament voiced in the following lines — "on this current journey through purgatory, I am content with the simple, I am looking out for the short cuts, those that lead straight to salvation" — presents a universal plight that cannot be limited to the personal trauma of a Beirut woman whose alienation is partly occasioned by the civil war.

Nasrallah's characters, even those leading the simplest of lives in the small village, are capable of flights of imagination equal to a poet's. A young girl, in describing Maxine who is known as Summer Breeze to the villagers, says she was "wearing that nightdress the colour of dawn mist." If such words come clearly across in English to the reader, then the credit goes to Porteous's sensitivity to the Arabic language "Those who believe that faith-

fulness to the original should be sacrificed for readability", writes Porteous in the preface, "will never convince all those who contradict them and vice versa." She herself is on the side of faithfulness most of the time, sacrificing it only very rarely — in those instances where in English the word would make no sense as is the case, for example, with the word *kawakeb*: Planets and stars are not interchangeable in English, as they sometimes are in Arabic, so the translation has to be "stars" not "planets".

Another example of attentive translation is the way Porteous deals with the problem posed by the title *Khutut El-Wahn El Ra'ia*. "El-Wahn" could equally be translated into either "imagination" or "illusion". The short story carrying that title is about both, and thus the word "El-Wahn" remains ambiguous. Similarly, "El-Ra'ia" could be translated into "wonderful" or "fantastic". Porteous, because she believes that the anthology celebrates the creative power of imagination, chose "imagination" rather than "illusion", but retained the hint of illusion by choosing "fantastic" rather than "wonderful". Thus she demonstrates that the balance between faithfulness and readability can be managed.

In this bilingual edition it is easy for the reader to compare the original with the translation and judge for him/herself. A bilingual edition also helps the reader who is not too fluent in one of the languages, English or Arabic, by having access to the two texts simultaneously. *The Fantastic Strokes of Imagination* is the second bilingual edition to be published by Elias Modern Publishing House, the first being *In the Cold Night*, a collection of short stories by Mohamed El-Makhszangi. In the virtual absence of Arabic/English bilingual editions in Egypt, the educational need for more is obvious and the efforts of the publishers to supply this need are laudable.

Reviewed by Sahar Hamouda

## An Egyptian seeks inspiration abroad while a European finds it in Fayoum

## Live from New York

Bronze busts wink as Fayza Hassan discovers a new gallery for the well-heeled globe-trotter

When invited to a friend's place for the first time, well-mannered people rarely go around asking the hostess how much she paid for that elegant little coffee table, or the Bukhara hung over the sofa. It is simply not done. Most, however, are dying to know. The next best thing they can do is to ask where this or that came from, in the hope that the hostess will let some quantitative information slip through in the conversation.

In May El-Arabi's new gallery, one feels much the same. Arranged like the reception area of a chic home, the cozy gallery makes it hard to remember that things are actually for sale. May herself behaves like a hostess showing her friends around. The small entrance is framed by antique lithographs depicting ruined columns. The lithographs "hang" by trowel-hoof cords and pompons, cunningly stencilled onto the wall. From there one proceeds to a large living room with several intimate corners inviting lazy conversation, a slightly more formal dining room and a sort of tiny boudoir where one could picture the perfect hostess on her lunch break, listening to music while embroidering one of those sweet little grandma's doilies, perhaps. Not that May has time to sit and embroider, maybe not even listen to music.

With a husband who appreciates a vivacious social life, two children and a third due soon, her job as an interior decorator and now the gallery, she has her hands more than full. Full of bubbling vitality, she seems to take it all in stride. While May's husband was studying at Stanford, she attended Canada University, taking three years of courses in interior decoration. There she acquired a knowledge of, and a taste for, the antiques available at US auctions, mostly imported from Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. May now travels to New York three or four times a year. She not only brings back objects, she imports ideas. "It is really all about ideas, about change, about new ways of doing things," says May. "I would like clients to wander in, ask questions, and maybe they will find some inspiration — or a new material to upholster their sofa and make it look different."



Surrounded by objects which came airfreight, directly from New York

May is flexible: she will decorate an entire apartment, a single room, just give advice or explain a technique or sell a piece of furniture. She doesn't seem to mind giving out ideas and providing inspiration. She has painted and wallpapered the walls of the gallery herself. Fox marble, combed lacquer-work, sten-

cils, special effects with wall-paper: she displays her workmanship along with new ways of approaching your walls. "Now, I am teaching these methods to Egyptian craftsmen," she says. Her windows are better dressed than many women I know: each complements the desired setting, offering a view in as well as out.

The general impression is a combination of creativity, opulence and a touch of humour. A home is a place in which to be happy seems to be the message.

The gilded stiffness one so often observes in some professionally decorated interiors is completely foreign to May. Here everything has a life of its own: different arrangements are always suggested, objects are interchangeable. The ultimate effect is one of relaxed harmony and somehow you wouldn't be surprised if one of the interesting bronze heads suddenly winked at you — in a discreet way of course, because ultimately, in May's world, life is only room for good taste.



photos: Randa Sheath



Jonathan and Honey

One of the things I miss most about Australia is the citizens' general compliance with rules and regulations and their respect of other people's space and property. Even pens fall in step to the point where one is led to believe that a mutation has taken place to produce law-abiding animals.

I had a chance to observe this at close quarters when I acquired a future champion white chinchilla kitten from a reputable breeder. Following the step-by-step training manual included in the price, I had Honey obeying the basic rules of savour-vivre in no time. Even as a kitten he had a regal air, turning up his nose at table doilies, and only nibbling daintily at his special biscuits when invited to do so. He never sniffed at our food or begged for occasional morsels.

Disdaining the other neighbourhood cats of lesser lineage, he struck up a friendship with my friend Mim's basset hound Jonathan, who seemed every bit as stuck up as he was. They met punctually at eight in the morning in front of my door and went exploring the bush at the back of the houses, returning at night full to deposit at our feet offerings of dead snakes and lizards. They never deviated from this routine or their schedule.

One night we were woken by a storm the likes of which we had never witnessed before. The wind was howling and rain was pouring, to say nothing of thunder and bolts of lightning. Miscellaneous items previously attached to buildings were flying around, carried by the force of the tempest. Honey hated noise and despised water, with which he was well acquainted, having had to submit to a monthly bath from the moment he had taken up bush hunting. Instead of cowering under the sofa, however, he was acting hysterical, wanting to be let out. A continuous scratch at the door soon provided an explanation to his strange behaviour. Jonathan was calling him. Fighting against the elements, I finally, with great difficulty, managed to open the door a crack in the hope that Jonathan would come in. Honey shot out instead like a creature possessed. It was two in the morning. None of the animals had previously been out at night. We sat up worrying about them, suddenly oblivious to the havoc being wrought around us by the storm. The telephone lines were down. I couldn't even alert Mim. We just waited.

In the early hours of the morning, the storm began to lose some of its intensity, but it was still pouring and the few trees still left standing were shaking and heaving furiously in the wind. I stood at the window watching an emergency squad repair the telephone lines, badly entangled with the branches of fallen trees. We had lost a beautiful young eucalyptus but, more importantly, Honey and Jonathan were missing. Suddenly a movement in a small hedge across the road attracted my attention. Something was cautiously crawling out, but it was hard to make out the complicated shape. Finally I saw it clearly: Jonathan and Honey, alive and well, were dragging something pale and stiff between them. It took them five good minutes to cover the distance but finally they made it across the lawn and placed it on my feet — half a frozen chicken. I left the chicken where it lay, in a puddle, and proceeded to give the two friends a proper welcome. Jonathan, not terribly partial to cat food, accepted a few slices of roast beef, whereupon he made it clear that it was time he departed. He trotted — briskly this time — towards his house, without a glance at his "catch" still defrosting on my doorstep.

1. on the other hand, had to deal with the chicken. Neither Honey nor Jonathan had ever been known to steal. Their reputation in the neighbourhood had been impeccable so far. Now this little caper would put a blemish on it for ever. Besides, I had no idea where the bird came from. The mystery was elucidated later in the morning, however, when I heard Tracy, who lived just next door, recounting her own experience of the storm to another neighbour. Her kitchen window, according to her story, had blown open, as had the door to the deep freezer. The force of the wind had then carried several frozen items away. I wondered what else Honey and Jonathan had stolen and whether Mim had been the recipient of gifts from the two culprits as well. She never said a word so I kept mum, but to soothe my conscience I invited Tracy and her family to a Sunday lunch in which chicken figured prominently. I observed Tracy the following Sunday going to lunch at Mim's. I heard her compliment Mim on the succulence of the leg of lamb.

Fayza Hassan

In Fayoum, overlooking Lake Karoun, I was told there was a magical place called Tunis where artists and craftsmen lived the simple life in tasteful domed houses made of mud and straw in the best classical Arabi style. So when Sherif, our photographer, said he had a friend, cartoonist Nabil Tag, who had a house in Tunis, I suggested we visit him and meet some of the other people who lived there.

I come from an artists' colony myself, a small fishing town called St Ives. For the last hundred years, painters, potters and writers, both successful and aspiring, have set up house there. They lived in fishermen's cottages, sail lofts and converted barns. They were often seen, usually in pubs, their colourful clothes splashed with paint or clay, the women in ethnic dresses, the men half hidden by luxuriant beards. They lived simply, like their Cornish neighbours. They were regarded with suspicion, however, and some of their bohemian excesses met with deep-felt outrage, often expressed by the unwelcome custom of leaving a sack full of rotting fish on the offender's doorstep. Would an Egyptian colony be all that different? I was about to find out.

We drove west along the lake, past Al-Moushareq and Al-Abadiya. There was Tunis, up in the hills to our left, an Arabian fairytale of a place, the sun-baked mud houses blending perfectly with their surroundings. Well-spaced amongst the palm and eucalyptus trees, each one a little castle, its domain enclosed by mud walls. They bore no resemblance whatsoever to the small squat houses that belonged to the Bedouins who have lived there since they abandoned their nomadic lifestyle.

As we climbed the hill, raggedy children with huge eyes stood around watching us in silence, their faces impassive, unlike the ones we had seen earlier, all smiles and shouted greetings. But where were the artists? Most houses were shuttered and bolted like any summer villa in Agami. Here and there I glimpsed a gleaming Cherokee or Peugeot parked outside a house but there was definitely an 'out of season' feel to the place. Fortunately, the potters Evelyn Porret and her husband Michel Pastore live there all year round. There is a beautiful place, furnished with simplicity and charm. No sharp lines but harmonious curves,

'Everything I have ever loved about Egypt was here in front of my eyes. I bought some land and built my house on it'

Evelyn Porret



Michel Pastore, Evelyn's husband, observed by young Bedouin disciple



photos: Sherif Sanbol

## In search of Utopia

Paradise or colony? Jackie van Gelder visits Tunis and gets a glimpse of the good life

arches and quiet, secluded places shaded by many trees and flowering shrubs. Beautiful pottery with soft, delicate glazes enchants but does not overwhelm the visitor. It is the work of two people who have dedicated their whole lives to their craft.

Evelyn and Michel, a handsome couple dressed in galabiyas, feet bare, reminded me not so much of as of the arid folk I had left behind, long ago, in misty Cornwall.

Evelyn Porret first came to Egypt in 1960. When she visited Fayoum, it was 'love at first sight'. "Everything I have ever loved about Egypt was here, in front of my eyes," she said. "I bought some land and built my house on it. But after the June War in 1967, foreigners were not

allowed to live in the Egyptian countryside, so I returned to France." She returned to Tunis in 1978 with Michel, her second husband, and their two young children. They have lived and made pots there ever since. Soon they were joined by their friends Nabil Tag and his wife, who built a traditional *fallahin* house, because "I cannot possibly sleep under a dome," he said. Gradually, more of their friends followed and a community was born.

At first there was plenty of work for the Bedouins, so more and more came. They built the houses, cleared the land and planted gardens for their new neighbours. This spirit lasted for a while but, as the Bedouin population grew, the work started to dwindle. Problems soon followed. "They graze their livestock on our gar-

dens, walk into our houses uninvited and we have all suffered many burglaries," complained Michel. Guards were hired and boundary walls hastily built to keep 'them' out. But the Bedouins are still there, in their tumble-down houses, in their ragged clothes, surrounded by animals and children, getting on with their lives as best they can.

Some time ago, Evelyn, who had been very impressed by the workshops of Wasef Wasef in Haraniya, started a pottery school for Bedouin children. It was a great success. They soon produced well-made pots and clay figures. "They are very creative and original," said Evelyn. "Are they naughty?" I asked. "Oh yes, they can be very naughty, but I love their work," she replied. Sadly, this project is too often fraught with problems when dealing with a slow and indifferent bureaucracy. It is to be hoped that this small ledge spanning the deep chasm between the haves and the have-nots will not be too long to founder.

As I drove back to Cairo, some Bedouin girls, graceful as gazelles, strolled languidly down the road, huge pots of water on their heads. One of them stopped to gaze across the lake at the wind-sculpted dunes that marked the beginning of the endless desert. A harsh and beautiful wasteland where people roamed freely for thousands of years.

To a lucky few, Tunis is the realisation of a dream; but the Bedouins, what they dream of as they gaze out over the Karoun?

## Sufra Dayma

## Macaroni and chicken mix

**Ingredients:**  
1/2 packet of macaroni (small ring-shaped)  
Whole breast of a boiled chicken (diced)  
3 cups of chicken stock  
One large onion (sliced in fine rings)  
One large green pepper (diced)  
1/4 kg of mushrooms (fresh)  
1 tsp. crushed garlic  
1 tbsp. soy sauce  
1 tbsp. tomato paste  
Salt-pepper-cayenne  
Butter

**Method:**  
Boil the macaroni the usual way, rinse it and set aside in a strainer. In a cooking pan fry the mushrooms in butter until tender. Remove from the pan and leave aside. In another pan fry the onion rings until tender, then add the garlic (do not brown). Add the green pepper, stir fry for a few seconds then add the soy sauce and the tomato paste. Season, then add the mushrooms, the chicken stock and season again to taste. When the mixture boils, add the chicken pieces, lower the heat and simmer. Four over the macaroni when the mixture is slightly thickened, stir it in well and leave covered over heat for a few minutes until all ingredients mix well. Serve hot with grated cheese and a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

## Restaurant review

## What's in a cellar

Nigel Ryan on the absence of Edgar Allan Poe

Horrid things have a tendency to happen in the cellar. Those corpses that are not found immediately in the library are discovered years later beneath the stone flagged floor of the basement. A mouldering canyofloss of cobwebs drapes dust-covered bottles and somewhere in the darkness lurks Edgar Allan Poe. It is worse than the woodshed, if only because it is underground.

There are, of course, cellars and cellars. No cobwebs are to be found in the one beneath the President Hotel in Zamalek. True, there are bottles, rows of them, lined up in the muck windows that punctuate the walls. But I will guarantee that you can remove as many tiles as you like from the floor and find nothing as remotely incriminating as a corpse.

The bottles along the walls set the tone of the place. The Cellar is a boozy place, and between its walls a great deal of the stuff is consumed. But it is also a restaurant, and though the menu is not long, it is as extensive as that boasted by a great many establishments that would bill themselves as restaurants rather than bars that happen to serve food. And the food at the Cellar is often much better than the fare offered by its rival restaurants.

One problem, perhaps, is the place's popularity as a watering hole. This means, in the evenings, that it is often difficult to get a table if you are not a regular customer. Lunchtimes, though, are seldom that crowded, and it was at lunchtime that I went.

The menu is written on a board on the wall. But these are only main courses, and it is wise to ask about the meze. It was from the list recited off by the waiter that we chose.

We opted for a calamari salad, stuffed vine leaves, mixed salad, fried calamari and a dish described as strips of fillet cooked with mush-

rooms, that appeared on the bill as "fillet cellar". The food arrived at a fast and furious pace, each dish seeming a little larger than the one just delivered, until we realised that we had ordered enough to feed four.

The Cellar offers good, plain restaurant cooking at its best. There are no frills, no intricately constructed garnishes. The food arrives in plain white dishes, and proved uniformly delicious. The calamari salad contained shrimps in a dressing heavily flavoured with cumin, red pepper and lemon. The fried version consisted of large goujons in a light batter — which contrived to be neither overcooked nor soggy. While salad snobs would perhaps carp about the mixed salad and complain that it was boring, the ingredients showed a concern for marketing that is far from common. And the "fillet cellar" did indeed contain pieces of fillet with mushrooms. It also contained finely chopped green pepper, added towards the end of the cooking, and came in a gravy that had not been over-thickened. The beef had been braised till tender, but not overcooked. The vine leaves proved the perfect advertisement for a dish that is all too often rendered banal by shoddy preparation, and were served with a side dish of *labnah* to which lemon juice had been added.

There was nothing to fault in the meze, and it could, as noted, have easily sufficed for four. Which is perhaps a good thing, given that the bill reached LE150, though this did include two imported beers, the only kind available.

If the cellar contains nothing as incriminating as a corpse there is also an absence of anything as incriminating as a half eaten meal.

The Cairo Cellar, beneath the President Hotel, Taha Hussein Street, Zamalek.

## Al-Ahram Weekly

## Crossword

By Samia Abdennot

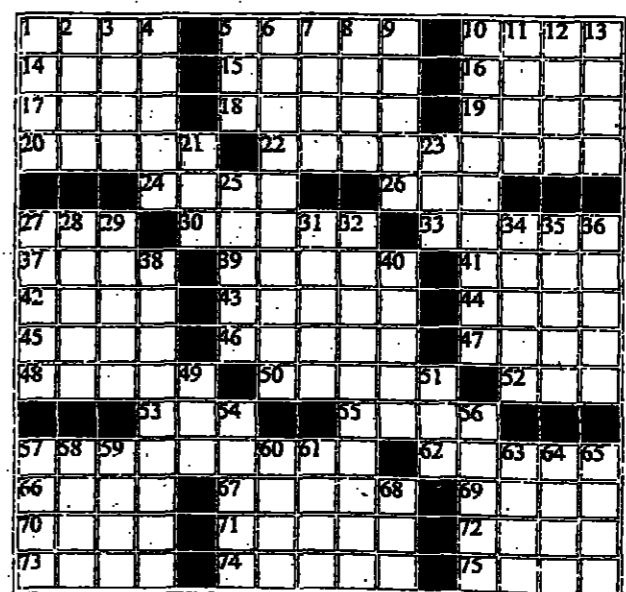
## ACROSS

1. Type of mollusk (4)
5. Anniversary; banquet (5)
10. Young salmon (4)
14. South American capital (4)
15. Summon; conjure up (5)
16. Musical instrument (4)
17. Baking chamber (4)
18. Jeans twilled fabric (5)
19. Governor; principle (4)
20. Pavarotti (5)
22. Esteemed; set great store by (9)
24. Cheerful (4)
26. Greek letter (3)
27. Venture; experiment with (3)
30. Minister of Indian state (5)
33. Tilt, hyp. wds (5)
37. Rocky ledge (4)
39. Tossed (5)
41. Bones forming human pelvis (4)
42. Culture media (4)

43. 9am canonical hour of prayer (5)  
44. Sisters (4)  
45. Father (4)  
46. Proclaim speech (4)  
47. Garden paradise (4)  
48. Reddish oil for hair (5)  
50. Shade, jubled (5)  
52. Superlative suffix (3)  
53. Civil Servants of Rumania, abb. (3)  
55. Indian peasant (4)  
57. Laundry, yph. wds (9)  
62. Well done (5)  
66. Lords-andadies plant (4)  
67. Aorta hole (5)  
69. Vivacity (4)  
70. Well proved with (4)  
71. Cloth peon with (5)  
72. Pry (4)  
73. Foremost (4)  
74. Part (5)  
75. Beloved (4)

## DOWN

1. Congulatic (4)
2. Be (4)
3. So be it (4)
4. Country case (5)
5. Nourished (5)
6. All places; wds (10)
7. Excellent, wds (4)
8. Snow foot, pl. (4)
9. Entice (5)
10. Rodent with erectile spines (9)
11. Connect (4)
12. Personification; one's face



13. Vibrating part of oboe or clarinet (4)
21. Angler's stick (3)
23. ...de-Nil = greenish colour (3)
25. Begin doing something vigorously, 2 wds (5)
27. Riff-raff (5)
28. State monopoly of tobacco (5)
29. Have a fancy for (5)
31. Rich tapestry (5)
32. Pertaining to drink of the gods (10)
34. Dodge (5)
35. To the ... = elaborate (5)
36. Stund, jumbled (5)
38. De Gaulle and Pompidou (9)
40. Describing unkempt garden (5)
49. Forest tree (3)
51. Male fern (3)
54. Judges' garb (5)
56. Vogue; tendency (5)
57. Lukewarm (4)
58. Operatic solo (4)
59. Muslim ascetic (4)
60. Arm bone (4)
61. Turf (4)
63. Genus of bitter herbs (4)
64. Anatomical duct (4)
65. Remarkable person (4)
68. North African title of respect

Last week's solution

مركز زلازل

# Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

In September 1898 the world felt as though it were treading on thin ice. Events in a remote spot in southern Sudan appeared to be pushing the world's major capitals — London, Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg — to armed conflict. A first world war seemed imminent, 16 years ahead of schedule.

*Al-Ahram's* owner and editor-in-chief, Bishara Tagla, who sensed the mounting tensions acutely, took the first available ship from Alexandria to the closest European port, and from there he travelled by train to Paris and London. From there, he could observe the dramatic developments unfold first hand and wire his reports to the newspaper directly.

That remote area was Fashoda, 600 kilometres south of Khartoum. "One had never heard of its name before today, although one may well have anticipated its rise to fame, as it lies at the confluence of the White Nile and the Nile," writes Tagla.

Fashoda was the site of a confrontation between French and British armed forces. Unbeknownst to the British, who had just defeated the Mahdist forces in Khartoum, the French Commander Marchand had brought a small regiment of eight European officers and 100 Senegalese soldiers to this small provincial capital and raised the French flag on a government building that had been built by the Egyptians during their former rule in Sudan. The British forces, led by the general commander of the Egyptian army, Lord Kitchener, considerably outnumbered the French. Proceeding southward from Khartoum on five steamers, Kitchener's forces numbered 1200 Egyptian infantry, 100 soldiers of the British Cameron Highlanders battalion and two batteries of mountain artillery. By all military standards, the British forces should have easily been able to clear the area of the French. However, such a confrontation would have had far-reaching ramifications. As Tagla wrote:

"In Fashoda, it is not a question of Kitchener against Marchand, man to man, or of a large army against a small expedition. It is a question of one nation against another, both of which are at the top of the civilised world."

Though, perhaps "the colonial world" may have been what Tagla had in mind. Tagla has clearly underscored the significance of Fashoda in terms of the history of international relations, the colonial partition of Africa, and, finally, the history of Egypt. Much has been written about the incident at Fashoda, but, regardless of how scholarly and well-researched, these works in general have two important shortcomings. They fail to examine the Egyptian reactions to the event, even though Cairo was one of the primary parties concerned. Secondly, they lack the fervour of day-by-day accounts despite the heat of the crisis. Both these aspects are provided, vividly, in the pages of *Al-Ahram* during the summer of 1898.

Nine months before the Franco-British crisis erupted, and while the Egyptian and British governments were making preparations for the Sudan expedition to overthrow the Mahdist regime, the Egyptian press voiced its suspicion that the British had an ulterior motive. On 2 January, *Al-Ahram* wrote: "There is a group of people who believe that the arrival of the French military in Fashoda, before the arrival of the British and Egyptian soldiers in Sudan, is the main cause for the expedition."

*Al-Ahram* then relates a curious story. Although there is no evidence to support it in the papers of Abdallah Al-Taishi, the Mahdi's *khalfi* or successor, or in official British documents, it is worthy of note. According to the report, Al-Khatm Mousa, Al-Taishi's agent in Kordofan, the administrative prov-

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Just as the Anglo-Egyptian military expedition in Sudan succeeded in bringing down the Mahdist regime in September

1898, an international crisis erupted over a little-known provincial capital in south Sudan, called Fashoda. The crisis pitted Britain against France, with Egypt caught in the middle. London and Paris moved to the brink of war. In this instalment of his chronicles of Egyptian life based on reports published in *Al-Ahram*, Dr Yunan Labib Rizq tells the story



ince to which Fashoda belongs, wrote to the *khalfi* in Omdurman, informing him that the French had entered the region from the south. While the report so far conforms to known facts, then it continues, "The commanders of the Anglo-Egyptian expedition wrote to Al-Khatm Mousa, telling him that the Egyptian Ministry of War would support him with money and ammunition if he would proceed southward to fend off any white man who crossed into Sudanese territory from the area of Bahr Al-Ghazal and to combat the French in the south."

While the story contains a certain logic, it is difficult to imagine that the Egyptians would lend assistance to the very enemy they were fighting on another front. It is equally difficult to imagine that the Mahdists could easily be diverted to a remote area in the south when the much graver threat of advancing Anglo-Egyptian forces loomed from the north.

Within a week after the overthrow of the Mahdist regime on 2 September 1898, events in Fashoda cast their shadow over the victory jubilation.

Five days after the Anglo-Egyptian victory at Omdurman, a ship from the royal Egyptian fleet entered Khartoum, approaching from the south. On board were a number of Mahdist soldiers, bearing ominous tidings. They had come from Fashoda, where they found "an army whose flag resembles that of the French." The army attacked the Sudanese forces garrisoned there, killing 100 and forcing the rest to flee. Instead of finding Al-Taishi's forces waiting for them in Khartoum, they were received by the general commander of the Anglo-Egyptian expedition, Lord Kitchener, who, upon interrogating the ship's captain, confirmed rumors of the presence of the French in the south. Kitchener forwarded this news to British authorities in Cairo, who instructed him to assemble "a considerable force" and to proceed southward to confront the French.

International opinion was on tenterhooks. The situation was about to explode, and Bishara Tagla was the only Egyptian journalist to travel to Europe. His presence, close to the decision-making circles in the French and British capitals lent *Al-Ahram* a distinct advantage in this instance over the other newspapers of the era. In addition to the reports from Reuters and other French and British news agencies, *Al-Ahram* provided its readers with special insights that only its editor-in-chief was in a position to offer.

Tagla spent twenty days in Paris from 12 September-2 October. During this period he spent one week in England, as we learn from the following dispatch: "Today I depart on my return trip to France from the British capital, where I had spent a week investigating the current trends of British gov-

ernment policies." *Al-Ahram's* pro-French stance was apparent from the outset. The British press was subjected to the sharpest criticism, while the French press was treated with evident sympathy. Tagla writes:

"The British press uses Egypt as a sword to strike forth in Sudan in the service of purely British interests and make British sovereignty over Egypt a pretext to fulfil British greater designs."

Striking a more cynical tone at the conclusion of his trip to London, he writes, "Public opinion is exactly as the British government would have it. The nation's newspapers are a powerful instrument at its disposal, and they will say nothing that does not concord with the government's perceptions of security and national interest."

Criticism levelled by the French press against the British was particularly well received. *Al-Ahram* was quick to adopt the French media position that "Egypt belongs to the Egyptians, Fashoda belongs to Sudan and Sudan belongs to Egypt." It rang true to Egyptian nationalist sentiments and it was diametrically opposed to British policy. For it to be realised, "Egypt must be free and unfettered. The British must release their selfish grip and leave."

Its pro-French stance naturally gave rise to *Al-Ahram's* customary rivalry with *Al-Muqattam*, the mouthpiece of the British occupation. Kitchener, according to *Al-Muqattam*, was "marching to Fashoda, armed to the teeth" and it pictured him as trouncing the French in no time and bringing back their slaughtered corpses. "When events proved otherwise, *Al-Ahram* could not restrain its *schadenfreude*. Referring to the owners of *Al-Muqattam*, it said, "As soon as their eyes were opened to reality, they realised how flawed their thinking was."

Unfortunately, events developed contrary to *Al-Ahram's* expectations as well. They had hoped that the French position with regard to Fashoda would revive the Egyptian question in international diplomacy, creating a climate that would constrain the British to end their occupation. The aspiration was expressed by the nationalist leader Mustafa Karmel, who was quoted in *Al-Muqattam*, another newspaper with strong nationalist sentiments: "What Egyptians must seriously consider is that France is defending the honour of its flag, while the British are defending their territorial ambitions. Meanwhile, the Egyptian government is in the distressful position of asking the British government to restore all of Sudan to Egypt, which in turn means expelling the French from Fashoda."

Eager to sustain their aspirations, which rested with the French, and inimical to the prospects of war

in general, *Al-Ahram* pleaded peaceful dialogue over military conflict, which appeared more and more inevitable in Fashoda. "The country which takes the first shot will bear the brunt of accountability to mankind. We therefore trust that neither party entertains thoughts of that nature," it commented. Bishara Tagla, in one of his dispatches from Paris, reaffirmed these sentiments: "The question must be resolved, either through negotiation or arbitration, for the sensible people in both countries do not conceive that a clash of arms is a solution." A solution, in fact, is forwarded by Tagla in his dispatch to *Al-Ahram* dated 13 September: "We believe that France only bided its time with regard to the Egyptian question because it was confident that events in Sudan would ultimately resolve it. England, by diverting Egypt of Sudan, forced France to occupy remote and uninhabited areas in Bahr Al-Ghazal and Fashoda, posing a counter to Britain's rule from Egypt to Khartoum. Thus, if Britain claimed that Fashoda belongs to Egypt, and that Britain would help the Egyptian government re-establish its authority there and then leave, France would be in an equal position to make the same claim. This joint interest would naturally bring the issue before an international convention. If Britain were to refuse, it would be to her disadvantage, because France's occupation of those territories stands in the path of her colonial enterprise in Africa."

Tagla, in his article, was echoing the French stance. However, if France believed that it could lure Britain to the negotiating table, it was mistaken. The real issue, to which Tagla had alluded in his article, was much larger than Fashoda.

The French presence in Fashoda not only posed a direct threat to the British presence in Egypt, and to Britain's control over the Suez Canal navigation route, it also threatened the grand imperial vision for an Africa controlled via a Cape to Cairo river and rail transportation artery. For this, the British were prepared to go to war. It was little wonder, therefore, that the heated haggling between the French and British governments would culminate in a British threat of war. Tagla gives what purports to be an eye witness account of the event in Paris. In a meeting with the French minister of foreign affairs, the British ambassador attempted to convey the risks the French government incurred if it persisted in its stance and he asked the minister to offer some pledge that France would relent. When the minister refused, "The ambassador shot out of his chair, his face flushed with anger. He grabbed his hat as an indication that he was about to leave, and said, 'Then, we are on the brink of war.' The French min-

ister was grievously agitated and feared dire consequences.

Although we may be given to doubt the accuracy of the account, given that 19th century diplomacy had already developed other methods of issuing such warnings, the fact remains that the warning was given. This, in conjunction with other circumstances, would ultimately force France to back down.

At the height of the Fashoda incident, the notorious Dreyfus affair erupted. Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army was accused of selling secrets to the Germans. Although he was later proven to be innocent, his trial provoked a wave of anti-Semitism in France. The deeply divisive issue split French society into two camps: the Republicans and Socialists on one side and the Royalists and the army on the other.

At the same time, the French were constrained by a bilateral defense accord they had concluded with Russia four years previously. The accord was aimed primarily to counter the threat posed by Germany. With regard to Fashoda, the Russians advised the French not to allow the crisis to escalate to the level of armed conflict.

*Al-Ahram* argued that "Russia is in total accord with France with regard to the Fashoda matter. Russia believes that Great Britain is its traditional foe and that Britain's actions in the Near and Far East demonstrate its anger over the accord that was concluded between Russia and France."

But the hopes *Al-Ahram* had pinned on France were shattered. The news that Marchand was ordered to pull out of Fashoda came as a serious blow. *Al-Ahram*, and the nationalists in Egypt, were thrown into dismay. "There must be a profound cause that led France to yield to British demands," commented *Al-Ahram's* Cairo correspondent in dismay. What this cause may have been led the writer to speculate: "France's silence is the most tangible proof of a grave menace. We have already established that France was not afraid to challenge Britain at sea, since it was fully prepared to defend the honour of its flag and to fight force with force. Rather, some other reason must have conspired to augment France's reservations: a threat by the Germans or a suggestion that the Italians will support the English at sea, or some other such circumstance that would so upset the balance of power against the French as to make entry into war a mad endeavour."

Yet, even as Egyptians speculated about the causes of the dramatic French retreat, their predictions concerning its ramifications on the Egyptian question continued to be optimistic. *Al-Ahram* wrote: "Henceforth, France will be compelled by two factors to fight the British at every opportunity, whether by peaceful or non-peaceful means. The first is the importance of French interests in Egypt. The second is to avenge the stain caused by having to force its valiant soldiers to abandon the land [Fashoda] that they reached after thirty months of arduous travel over vast seas, turbulent rivers and treacherous wasteland, performing glorious tasks the likes of which history has never recorded."

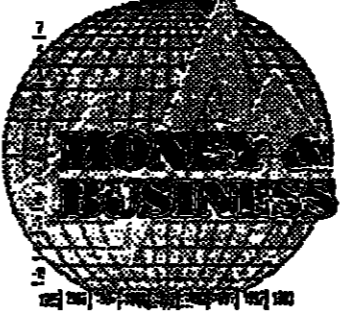
The following six years would prove that *Al-Ahram's* optimism was sadly misplaced. Fashoda marked a turning point in Anglo-French relations. Henceforth, the two countries would turn from rivalry to cooperation in the pursuit of their respective colonial interests, and Egypt would be the first victim.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



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## Inter-Pak '96 in Dusseldorf

THE ARAB German Chamber of Commerce in Cairo, in cooperation with the Dusseldorf Fair Organisation, is organising a symposium for Inter-Pak '96, to be held in Dusseldorf from 9-15 May.

Participating in the symposium will be Dr Kohl, head of the Federation of Paper and Cardboard Industries, and Mr Kostarz, director of Inter-Pak at the Dusseldorf Fair Organisation.

The exhibition is considered the largest exhibition in the packing and canning industry, which also includes confectionery manufacturing. The two officials will shed light on the newest technology in the field of packing and canning using

raw and processed materials. May Khelil, the chamber's representative at the exhibition, explained along with the newest technology for packing and canning pharmaceuticals and foodstuffs, special emphasis will be placed on making packaging more environmentally safe.

In other exhibition news, a large number of Egyptian companies within the textile and weaving industry will take part in the largest exhibition for fabrics and textiles, in Frankfurt, Germany from 12-14 March. The exhibition, which takes place 4 times a year, showcases the latest materials, accessories, fabric designs, and equipment used in the

industry.

More than 40 countries, including Egypt, will participate in the exhibition. The exhibition is of special importance for Egyptian companies, for it offers them a chance to display their wares in front of a large number of visitors. This is all the more important, especially since Egyptian fabric exports to Germany have taken off since the last period.

"Painting the town red" will take on a different shade of meaning as Munich plays host to a paint exhibition, from 28-31 March. The exhibition will offer the latest developments in the area of adhesives and paints, along with the most modern tools

and techniques for painting buildings and automobiles. Realising that these exhibitions are important to Egyptian companies and all those interested.

### Coca-Cola on top

FORTUNE magazine's fourteenth annual survey placed Coca-Cola Company as the top-ranked company in America.

It is the seventh consecutive year that Coca-Cola has been ranked in the magazine's top ten of the best companies.

In this survey, *Fortune* asked more than 11 thousand managers and executives to rate companies along a variety of guidelines, which include quality of management, quality of products and services, quality control, creativity, and interest in the society and environment.

As a result, Coca-Cola was given the highest long-term investment value for the fourth year in a row, and likewise received top marks for the quality of its management.

The study included 417 American companies. Among the companies ranked in the top ten: Coca-Cola, Procter and Gamble, Rubbermaid, Johnson and Johnson, Intel, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola.

Coca-Cola is the largest manufacturer of carbonated beverages in the world. Four of its 5 brands (Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola Light, Fanta and Sprite) have the largest worldwide distribution, and consumers of more than 200 countries enjoy 834 million servings every day.

### Doubling exports

THE EGYPTIAN cabinet headed by Dr Kemal El-Ganzouri discussed proposals by the ministerial exports committee aimed at removing barriers to Egyptian foreign trade and exportation.

The committee has previously recommended the implementation of 5 measures aiming at granting further facilities for exporters in order to double exportation rate. The first measure will reduce the service tariffs imposed on exporters. The second measure will seek to launch markets for exports in Port Said, Suez and Damietta due to the industrial and commercial activities found in these places, such as the manufacture of cement, furniture, leather, foodstuffs and textiles.

The third measure will assign the Ministry of Industry the assessment of the cost of materials used in manufacturing exports, while the fourth measure will seek to produce customs tariffs on heavy trucks.

The fifth measure states the importance of capitalising on the potentials of Egyptian offices and institutions abroad so as to open new markets for Egyptian exports.

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## Travellers' book guide

# The one that got it all moving

Napoleon Bonaparte, fascinated by Egypt, brought with him various scholars specialised in science et al. Their records are now available in a single mini-publication

*Description de l'Egypte*, a massive publication which originally appeared between 1809 and 1826 in 36 volumes, caused a sensation and brought to Egypt large numbers of travellers from all over Europe. It inspired adventurers, scholars, artists and opportunists to flock to the land of the Nile and each, in different ways, added to the growing fascination with all things Egyptian.

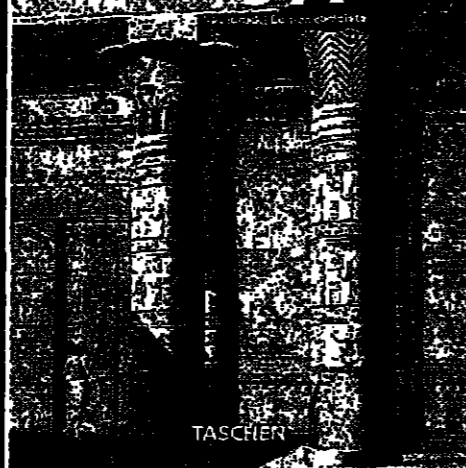
Now, the marvellous illustrations of the famous *Description* have been reproduced in one volume and give to the lay public their first opportunity to see the detailed record of the monuments, culture, customs, flora and fauna of Egypt, so carefully recorded by Napoleon Bonaparte's savants.

Napoleon's expedition to Egypt was a failure from a military point of view. He failed to wrench power from the British. But it remains remarkable for having given rise to a new science: Egyptology. Bonaparte was so fascinated by the history of Egypt that he brought with him numerous scholars specialised in various branches of science and art. This commission of learned men, led by the artist and diplomat Vivant Denon, a favourite in the court of Louis XV, accompanied General Desaix from Giza on his march up the Nile as far as Aswan. They kept records and made sketches of all the sites along the way. Never before had Egypt's ancient monuments been so thoroughly explored and described. Never before had imaginary reconstructions of the temples in their heyday been attempted, even to papyrus fluttering on pylons, and priests accompanying images of deities in solemn processions during religious festivals.

As for modern Egypt, the narrow streets of Cairo and Alexandria were mapped out. The splendid houses of the Mamlukes were drawn. The flora and fauna were painstakingly painted. There was no end to the vision and enthusiasm of this learned group of scholars.

Their interests ranged from inspecting machines for land irrigation to various methods of processing

## Description de l'Egypte



Alexandria's harbour



A zodiac, now in the Louvre Museum



Hair cutting and basketry were among the famous professions of that time

commodities. The citizens of Egypt were portrayed at their different tasks, their headgear and robes depicted. Plans and maps were drawn, as were insects, sea-creatures, birds, plants and reptiles. This painstaking work is still considered the basis of many studies.

In this day and age, when the speed and accuracy of modern technology has somewhat blunted our appreciation of human talent, Napoleon's learned scholars managed to bring Egypt within the range of modern science for the first time. This record could only stimulate further research, as, indeed, it did.

Some 400 engravers worked on the preparation of *Description de l'Egypte*, and over 2,000 people were engaged each year to complete the project. Its publication was without parallel in the annals of historical research.

As a result of this massive endeavour, not only were Europeans encouraged to visit Egypt to see the wonders of its ancient culture for themselves,

but it set off a lucrative trade in antiquities that has not ended, and in mummified flesh for medicinal purposes that fortunately has! Collectors acquired magnificent reliefs that were hacked from the walls of temples and tombs, as well as statues, and even before Champollion succeeded in deciphering the hieroglyphics on the famous Rosetta Stone in 1822, he already voiced apprehension about the desecration of monuments, urging that a government body be set up to protect them.

Publication of *Description* also set going the earliest large-scale expeditions to Egypt, which included those financed by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, the Berlin Museum, the Louvre and the British Museum. Individuals like the Italian adventurer-turned-Egyptologist Belzoni, who was the first person to enter the Great Pyramid, ended up discovering no fewer than seven tombs in the Valley of the Kings, including the longest and most splendid of all — that of Seti I. During his time in Egypt he "acquired" marvellous sculptures, some of

them great monoliths in granite, which he sold to collectors in Europe. At that time, there were no restrictions, no urge to protect the Egyptian heritage. So numerous were his acquisitions that an exhibition of his discoveries was organised in London in 1820 and was subsequently taken to Paris where it also drew even greater crowds.

Today, the pictorial part of the publication that started it all is available to the general reader for the first time. All illustrations in the 36 volumes have been reproduced in a huge mini-publication: this might sound like a contradiction in terms, but it is not. The 1,006 pages make it a thick, heavy book, while its size has been reduced to a tiny 14 by 20 cm format.

True, the details on some of the temples, the maps and texts, are obscure. But this is only to be expected in so ambitious a publication which enables us to enjoy the 3,000 illustrations reproduced in full and to see some of the monuments that no longer exist because they were either reduced to lime in

the 19th century or dismantled to use as quarry. Some of the reliefs record details that no longer exist, in colours that have been bleached or destroyed by environmental pollution of one kind or another.

These records also make possible an interesting comparison between the temples as found by Napoleon's savants, frequently obscured by village housing constructed within their walls, and the cleared and restored monuments we see today. Also, the lives of the rural people are shown, which differ little from conditions still found in many parts of Egypt today — apart from the clothing.

To possess such a book is a rare opportunity. The publisher points out that the original French captions have not been translated, and that "the sometimes idiosyncratic spelling of the Napoleonic age has been retained."

*Description de l'Egypte* is available at the American University in Cairo bookshop, and at all major book stores, for LE125.

Reviewed by Jill Kamil

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### Closed encounters

## From animals to artefacts

In the fourth part of an occasional series, the Weekly explores the urban legacies of the Nile

Never an ordinary source of water, the Nile features today in the disputes of nation states. But long before it became a political bargaining tool, the river covered a 6,648km stretch of mysterious and unknown territory, attracting intrepid explorers. It took centuries for geographers to map the twists and turns of the river. A study of the upper gorges of the Blue Nile was not completed until the 1960s.

In the 19th century, Cairo was already the meeting place for scholars, geographers and explorers to exchange information and discuss their shared passion for the Nile. Here, they unpacked their European bags to join their colleagues in poring over incomplete maps, comparing travel notes and planning future trips to unfamiliar parts of the river. Though those days are long gone, Cairo remains host to such meetings.

The scholars once met at the Royal Geographic Society, founded in 1875 and housed in a building that now lies on the grounds of the Shura Council across from the Cairo Barclays Bank on Sheikh Riham Street. It has evolved from a place of scholarship into what is now known as the Ethnographic Museum — a rather hodgepodge collection of displayed items.

The Egyptian army was the first to contribute to the museum's collections after returning from its military campaign in the Sudan at the end of the 19th century. Some of the smaller items displayed in the museum could easily have been tucked away in a soldier's pocket: metal amulets with tiny dangling bells, biscuit presses with geometric and floral designs, and coins from various periods.

Other items displayed are later additions: they range from a collection of old *shisha* (waterpipes) and coloured blown glass vases and bowls, to an impressive, but dusty (or impressively dusty) velvet tent embroidered with gold Qur'anic inscriptions. Set on the back of a camel, this tent was used to shelter an embroidered cover for the

Holy Kaaba (stone shrine) in Mecca.

A small room set apart from the main collection is dedicated to the achievements of the British in the building and maintenance of the Suez Canal. There are several models of a well laid out Port Suez city for 1926, 1927, and 1929, placed in three corners of the room. A motor-powered panorama simulating a ride through the canal has painted figurines in 1930s garb peering over a ship's prow as they pass various landmarks on the banks.

While a visit to the Ethnographic Museum offers glimpses into a long-gone era, many of the vessels on the Nile have retained their shape, if not their function. The standard design of the Egyptian *felucca* has not changed over the centuries, though today the boats are no longer the modes of transportation they once were. Today, the boatmen who steer *feluccas* make their living from taking passengers out for short scenic rides. As guests sit on benches along the edges of the boat, boatmen move from prow to stern, adjusting the sails and steering the craft.

Many of those who work in Cairo at the docks along the Nile hail from Aswan, Luxor, and Kom Ombo, where their 'New Nubia' community has grown since they were first relocated there in the late 1960s, when the whole of Nubia was inundated after the construction of the Aswan High Dam. They work for the dock owners for several months at a time without their families, and then return to their homes, laden with the good things that money can buy. Though there are sailors of various ethnic backgrounds, Nubians hold the reputation of being the best sailors. On rare occasions, passengers might hear those who guide the craft speaking Nubian — a dying language long replaced by Arabic — as they set the sails loose and rein them in again. More frequently they chant a haunting Nubian refrain.

When early explorers first went up the Nile with their Egyptian and Nu-

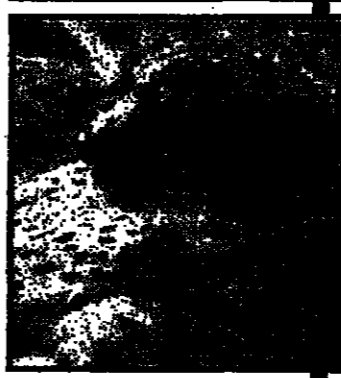
bian guides, they kept records of the flora and fauna they encountered. Some of the exotic animals can be seen by visiting the Cairo Zoological Garden, located in Giza, not far from the Nile. There, visitors can see some of Africa's most exotic species for themselves, in a delightful setting. Open from 8AM to 4PM during the winter, the zoo covers 80 acres of land. Wide circular paths under ancient mandrake trees are the favorite promenades of young couples, truant teenage schoolgirls and their boyfriends, and families with small children who wander through the landscaped grounds.

The zoo was originally founded by Khedive Ismail, who donated land from his palace grounds as well as animals from his own private collection.

Many of the species, once plentiful in the Fayoum Depression and around oases such as Dakkhia in the Western Desert, are now only found further south. Highlights of a trip to the zoo, therefore, are animals like the hippo, giraffe, elephant, and the once revered water creature of ancient Egypt — the crocodile.

A special attraction at the Cairo Zoo are four hippopotami born on the premises: Karima, Samira, Aida and Nora, who swim on hot days in their large pool and have more freedom in the grounds than most other, more aggressive, creatures.

The River Nile that traverses Egypt on its way northward to the Mediterranean passes Pharaonic monuments, rural communities, and highly developed industrial and university towns. While its waters still, in some places, rise to the level of the fields by such ancient devices as the *saqiya* and the *shaduf*, modern technology has now largely replaced the ancient, and one has to search the urban legacies of the last century for a fuller appreciation of the river that captured the attention of Herodotus, because he was the only one who knew of that which flowed from south to north.



Cairo Zoo (above) and a model in the Ethnographic Museum (below)

### Nefertari in demand

IT WAS a foregone conclusion that every visitor to Luxor would not be able to see Nefertari's newly opened tomb. But no one foresaw the large number of disappointed guests, of visualised long ticket queues that form every day before dawn. Tourists have been seen making their way across the Nile at 4AM, quite happy to sit out the opening of the ticket office in order to see the beautiful queen.

The number of visitors who have successfully gained entrance to the tomb in the past four months has already reached 18,000; and those turned away in disappointment, 53,000. Although it was announced that tickets can only be purchased on the morning of the viewing, some tour groups are managing to manoeuvre their way ahead of the shivering, woolen-clad queue-formers — much to their annoyance — and the numbers that are daily permitted to enter, we hear, by far exceed the original limit of 50, established to maintain suitable conditions for conservation.

### Mummies worth it

OVER the last three months of 1995, the Mausoleum of Mummies at the Cairo Museum clocked in 239,578 visitors — out of a total of 674,000 who visited the museum. The mummies' viewers were happy to pay extra to peek at the remains of some of Egypt's most illustrious kings. More than a few fretted that the bodies, stripped of their adornments, looked "rather pathetic." Others were delighted at the "strong features and high cheek bones" of Ramses II — the greatest builder in antiquity.

### King Tut's open?

DESPITE what have become perennial rumours of the closing of Tutankhamun's tomb for study, restoration, conservation and protection, it nevertheless seems to be open when ever visitors turn up at the Valley of the Kings. Although the tomb, is small, a total of 164,800 tourists visited it within a three-month period. A comment frequently heard among visitors: "How all those treasures in the museum fit into that tiny tomb, we shall never know."

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## First round standings

Club	P	W	L	D	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Sharqiya	7	6	1	-	18	3	+15	19
Soulb	7	5	-	2	16	5	+11	19
Sayadin	7	4	2	1	17	8	+9	16
Police U.	7	4	1	2	9	6	+3	14
Zamalek	7	3	4	-	19	11	18	13
S. El-Dokhan	7	2	4	1	4	12	-8	11
Smouha	7	-	6	1	1	14	-13	8
El-Shams	7	-	6	1	3	29	-26	8



Thrilling and fierce competition at the national hockey league

photo: Mohamed Wassim

# Fight is on for hockey crown

The top four hockey teams from the national league's first round are primed for all-out war in the second round. Eric Asomugha predicts grudge matches galore

The first round of the national hockey league ended last week. And, under a new system devised by Egyptian Hockey Federation President Gamal Shiraazi, the weaker teams are now eliminated and only the four top teams from the first round will remain to fight it out in the second — which is a major qualifier for the African Clubs League Cup.

When the final first-round tally was made, Sharqiya emerged ahead of the pack, but only on goal difference. On points, Sharqiya were level pegging with Soulb, both with 19 points. Back from suspension, two early season losses to Sharqiya and Soulb had not augured well for Sayadin, who came in third with 16 points, followed by Police Union and then Zamalek. The national team coach's own team, Sharqiya El-Dokhan, had managed only two wins to be placed sixth, trailed by Smouha, and, in last place, El-Shams.

In the final matches at Cairo stadium last week, Soulb upset Sharqiya 1-0 and Sayadin beat Smouha 2-0. At

the Police Union grounds, Sharqiya El-Dokhan defeated El-Shams 1-0, while Zamalek lost to Police Union.

For Sharqiya, the loss to Soulb made a sad ending to the first round, and disappointment was etched on the players' faces. Sharqiya had remained unbeaten throughout the season and were optimistic that they could maintain their winning streak. Out in the lead with 18 points from six matches, they seemed to take the outcome of their encounter with Soulb for granted, despite the fact that their opponent was trailing by only two points, with four wins and draws to their credit.

It was a slow-paced match, and supporters were in for a long wait before it sparked to life. A 20th minute second-half penalty corner converted by Mohamed Samir, one of the three brothers in charge of Soulb's attack, finally propelled the match into action. Sharqiya stepped up the pressure and launched sporadic attacks. Playmaker Magdi Abdallah was everywhere. Amr Osman in

centre, Nabil Fawzy from right and Ayman Darwish overlapping from behind. Soulb's half was besieged, but the defence stood firm. Sharqiya earned successive short corners which were well taken but lost. The final blow was a 34th minute penalty lost by Abdallah.

On the other side of the city, at Police Union stadium, Zamalek were unable to hold off Police to make the final four. They battled tooth and nail, but their best was not good enough, and Police scraped into the final four as the underdogs, a point ahead of Zamalek. This match was also a clash of the coaches, with the national team's current assistant coach, Mustafa Motasser and the team's former coach, Mohamed Hamouda both feeling they had something to prove. At the end of 70 minutes, Police had scored two solid goals which unlucky Zamalek could only answer with one.

The final four are now poised for the second round, another great opportunity for old rivals to settle their scores. Police have always been a great torment to

Sharqiya in crucial tournaments — Sharqiya's first tournament loss, in the 1984 league, was at the hands of Police, and Sharqiya's recent defeat by Soulb is another grudge the team would be only too pleased to settle. To add to their fervour in this regard, Sharqiya will doubtless recall that their second tournament loss, the 1994 Egyptian Cup, was at the hands of Soulb. Meanwhile, the recently reinstated Sayadin team will not be able to forget that it was their match with Soulb, in the battle for 1994 league's runners-up, which caused the ugly incident resulting in their suspension, disqualification from the league, and life bans for three of their players.

So come summer, we should see a display of the very best Egyptian hockey has to offer — a battle of the titans with old enmities lurking to spice up the action. All the other teams would like nothing better than to dethrone Sharqiya; Sharqiya, meanwhile, are determined to resist any attempt to usurp their crown.

## Board meeting

PRIME Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri last week met with the board of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports to discuss means of improving and developing sport in Egypt. The council's board includes the ministers for tourism, culture, defence, information, education, the interior, health, industry, local administration and El-Aqwat (religious endowments). Abdel-Moneim Emara, the Supreme Council's head, also holds ministerial status.

The board decided to implement a five-year plan to expand sports' facilities, with the construction of new stadiums, pitches and indoor halls. It also agreed that Egypt would organise more international and world championships.

## Tennis

JOP-RANKED Steffi Graf, sidelined since undergoing foot surgery in December, will make her 1996 debut at this week's Evert Cup, her first tournament since winning the WTA Tour Championships last November. Jennifer Capriati, who began her comeback last month at a tournament in Germany, and Monica Seles, will also be playing in the Evert Cup.

For the first time, this event will be played at the same time and on the same site as the Champions Cup men's tournament.

## Skiing

KATJA Seizinger became the first German in 20 years to capture the overall Skiing World Cup title when she finished third in the last downhill race of the season. Seizinger came in ahead of her closest rivals, Anita Wachter of Austria and fellow German Martina Ertl. Her performance was sufficient to give her the title with three races left in the season.

THREE Austrian skiers have been found dead after being crushed in an avalanche near Wettenegg, 300km west of Vienna in the Austrian Alps, local police said. Rescue workers managed to dig one other skier out of the snow. Elsewhere, a man died in another avalanche that struck Kitzbuehler Horn, 450km west of the Austrian capital.

## Disabled sport

THE EGYPTIAN Federation for Disabled Sport is organising the first ever Egyptian international wheelchair rally over a distance of 1,000km. The race, which begins on 20 April, will be held in commemoration of Sinai Liberation Day.

The first round will begin from Saint Catherine's, and the rally course will include both the North and South Sinai governorates and the Red Sea. France, England, Germany and Algeria are among the countries which have agreed to participate.

## Judo

THIS WEEK, Egyptian judo champions Heba Rashid and Basil El-Chanabawi are participating in the Polish International Championships in Warsaw. The event is part of their preparation for Atlanta '96, where both judokas will be representing Egypt in the Olympics. Heba Rashid won the gold medal in last year's Polish championships.

## Basketball

FIVE clubs will represent Egypt this week at the Arab Club Championships taking place in Lebanon from 13-24 March. The teams are: Ahli, Zamalek, Gezira, Itihad and Sporting. In the last championships, in Cairo last March, the three Egyptian clubs, Ahli, Gezira and Itihad, took the first three places in the men's competition, while Ahli's women's team took third place.

## Marathon

IZUMI Maki, competing in her first marathon, surged ahead to win the annual Nagoya International Women's Marathon by nine seconds. Maki, Japan's national half-marathon record holder, finished the 42.195km run through the streets of Nagoya in 2:27:32 hours. Sachiko Seiyar, also of Japan, was second in 2:27:41. The race was one of the last chances for Japanese women to catch the attention of the Japanese Amateur Athletics Federation, which is selecting three marathon runners to represent the country in the Atlanta Olympics.

## Boxing

FORMER world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis and his promoters have been stopped to prevent Britain's Frank Bruno's 16 March fight with Mike Tyson being billed as a world title bout. The court order ensures that the Bruno-Tyson fight will be for the World Boxing Council crown, currently held by Bruno. Lewis had claimed that he should have been next to fight Bruno, because he [Lennox] had defeated Lionel Butler in a 1994 bout. The WBC had announced at the time that the winner of this fight would be the next world title challenger.

Compiled by Abeer Anwar



photo: Medhat Abdel-Hamid

## Penalty pushover

LAST Sunday, Zamalek, in their red and white striped strip, met the Mauritian team Sunrise, resplendent in yellow and black stripes, at the Cairo Stadium. The meeting was the first leg of the first round of the African Club Cup for League Champions.

Despite a weak performance, Zamalek managed to beat Sunrise 3-1, a victory only secured by two penalties, reports Nashwa Abdel-Tawab. The first was scored by Mohamed Sabri in the game's seventh minute; the other came in the 26th minute of the second half, and was put away by Ahmed El-Kass. Sunrise meanwhile scored a penalty in the ninth minute of the second half. Zamalek's Qassi Said netted the Mauritians' net with the third goal in the second minute of extra time. Halted in their attempts at attack, the Mauritians resorted to defence —

which the team are famous for. Overall, though, Sunrise are not a strong team. However, despite their tactical weakness, they played a rough game, and were forced to play the second half with two players missing. Both had been sent off, one for a serious foul and the other for objecting to the referee's orders. Zamalek will fly to Mauritius on 24 March for the second leg match. Last year's Egyptian league champions Ahli, have been banned from this competition for two years by the Confederation of African Football (CAF). The ban was a result of Ahli's insistence on backing their controversial players, twins Hossam Hassan and Ibrahim Hassan, against the CAF. Ahli threatened to boycott the competition for a year if the CAF suspended the Hassans. The CAF responded by banning Ahli for two years.

# Sinai's 1070km cycle run

Cyclists in the 30th Tour d'Egypte are pedalling their way through South Sinai. But, reports Eman Abdel-Moeti, the race is proving an uphill struggle for the Egyptian teams

At its launch in the 1950s, the Tour d'Egypte was a world class race, taking its inspiration from the Tour de France. But as sponsorship faded away it gradually slipped into decline, and it was not until the '90s that attempts were made to restore the race to its former glory.

After four years of effort, Tarek El-Guindi, secretary of the Egyptian Cycling Federation, succeeded in getting International Cycling Federation recognition of the tour, first as an international competition, then as a super-tournament with 'real' prizes. The latter achievement was largely due to the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS), which granted the Egyptian federation LE300,000 for the event. Further financial assistance came from the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA), which saw the race as a potential tourist attraction, drawing visitors to

Egypt's beauty spots.

Now the competition is back on its feet again, with \$10,000 in prizes. Instead of the usual first prize of a car, this year's winner will be awarded \$2,500; second prize will be \$1,500; \$1,000 for third prize; \$750 for fourth and fifth; \$500 for sixth and seventh; \$250 for the eighth and ninth; and \$100 for the tenth.

Although the distance to be covered this year is the usual 1,070km, the course is not a straight run from Cairo to Aswan. Instead, the whole race is taking place in South Sinai, passing through Dahab, Sharm El-Sheikh, Nuweiba, and St Catherine's. The race will be divided into eight stages, explained Adel Yasin, head of the federation. "But first, we had an 11km preliminary race to determine the order of the teams at the starting line."

The preliminary race was held in

Dahab, with 11 teams, two each from

Egypt, Russia, and Germany, and one each from France, the Ukraine, Algeria, Tunisia, and Syria. One of Egypt's teams came first, and so was placed first in the order of the teams, followed by the Ukrainian, and then the French, teams. However, France won the first stage, cycling the 141km around Sharm El-Sheikh in 13:53:24 hours. Algeria came second, followed by Tunisia. Federation officials were alarmed that Egypt's best team could only manage sixth place, with a time of 13:58:13 hours.

In the first stage individual event, France's Oliver Martin won first place in 4:23:46 hours, followed by Algerian Haddad Khalil, then Ukrainian Molchura Olic. Egypt's Abdel-Rahman Tawfiq came in fourth.

Edited by Inas Mazhar

Federation secretary Tarek El-Guindi immediately held a meeting with coaches Uri Lafranchi and Esam Ashour, and the federation's technical committee to express his surprise and disappointment at the poor performance. "This is a professional standard of competition, and our cyclists were expected to be up to it," he commented. There was also disappointment that, despite better organisation and international status, few world class cyclists had turned up for the race.

During the second stage on Saturday, France maintained its first place, with the Ukraine coming in second over the 178km distance to Sharm El-Sheikh and back. The third stage, on Sunday, saw Egypt ahead of the field for the first time, as the cyclists followed a 66km course around Dahab. They were followed by the Ukraine and France.

## Olympic countdown

### Egypt in Atlanta

THE EGYPTIAN Olympic Committee has decided on the Egyptian official delegation and has selected some of the athletes who will represent Egypt in Atlanta '96.

The athletes with a ticket to Atlanta are: Rania Elwani and Tamer Zehnoun in swimming; Heba Rashid and Basil El-Gharabawi in judo; Mohamed Khorshid in shooting; Ali Ibrahim in rowing and Mustafa Abdel-Hareth in wrestling. The handball team has also been selected.

### Epo tests

THE INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) has declared that it plans to test athletes at this year's games for erythropoietin, or epo, doping. Prince Alexandre de Merode, president of the IOC's medical commission, said that a way had finally been discovered of detecting the drug. Epo stimulates production of red blood cells, which carry oxygen and so give the body more energy.

### Cape Verde in

WITHOUT the benefit of coach, sponsor or teammates, Henry Andrade will nevertheless be representing his country, Cape Verde, in the Olympics. Andrade, a hurdler who finished sixth in the US Olympic trials in 1984 and 1992, holds both US and Cape Verde citizenship.

Andrade is confident that he can meet the International Athletics Federation (IAAF) standard, but his entry is secured because he is the only top class athlete from his country. Under International Olympic Committee rules, all countries, no matter how small, are eligible to enter athletes in the Olympics.

### Arab on the IOC

HASSIBA Boulmerka from Algeria is the only Arab to be selected by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for election to the IOC's Athletes Commission. To be eligible, candidates must have competed in two Olympics and been a member of their own country's IOC Athletes Commission.

### Politicos out

ATLANTA Olympics organisers have assured the IOC that Taiwanese political leaders would not be invited to this summer's games and said that all precautions were being taken to prevent terrorist attacks.

He Zhenliang, China's member on the IOC's executive board, reiterated Beijing's opposition to the presence of any Taiwanese government officials at the games.

Taiwan, which China considers a rebel province, is allowed to compete in the Olympics using its Chinese name, Taipei. Beijing had hinted that it might boycott the games if Taiwanese leaders were invited.

### Super device

A STATE-of-the-art device considered three times more effective than standard drug-testing equipment will be in use at this summer's Olympics. The high resolution mass spectrometer can detect steroid use up to three months prior to testing, and are far more sensitive in detecting the presence of the drug, according to IOC Medical Commission chairman Prince Alexandre de Merode.

The spectrometers, which cost up to \$500,000 each, can detect approximately three times the number of cases than is possible with standard equipment.

The machines have been used at the IOC-accredited laboratory in Cologne, Germany, where 64 positive cases were detected last year in weightlifting, compared to just 17 positive results the year before, when standard equipment was in use.

### Fan Coke

THE COCA-COLA company hopes to cash in on the Olympics with an advertising campaign that focuses on the fans rather than the athletes. Their campaign will carry the slogan: "For the fans".

### In for a pound

ROBBIE Pound, the accountant hired by the Metropolitan Atlanta Olympic Games Authority, the body charged with monitoring preparations for Atlanta '96, has said that the chances of the games making a loss have been reduced.

Pound had previously warned that the organisers had only a 50-50 chance of breaking even. But his confidence had risen, he said, because the authority was placing a greater emphasis on controlling costs.

Compiled by Nashwa Abdel-Tawab

# Salah Enani: In your face

Somewhere between aloof artist and pragmatic bread-winner, at 41, he's found a way to make both Jekyll and Hyde happy



Photo: Randa Sheekh

Even if you haven't heard of Salah Enani, you've probably seen one of his paintings. It's practically a trademark: Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz sitting at a coffee house, his mole nearly bigger than his bespectacled head. The image sticks in the mind, maybe because the media's Mahfouz really does seem like all glasses and mole sometimes.

Salah Enani the artist can be just as much of a caricature. Say his name and the first thing that comes to mind are the vests and ties, the vibrant colours and lush corduroys he always wears. Then the beard and macho stare. Scanning the scene at his favourite hangout, he seems to fashion himself Cairo's Mastroianni and Van Gogh, at the same time.

Salah has been painting his trademark caricatures for over a decade now. Some might consider discovering your artistic niche in your 30s, then licking the icing for the rest of your life, a bit of a sell-out. Others would call it smart as hell.

He specialises in what might be called tender moments. At his Hanagar exhibition, I heard an urgent whisper in the vicinity of a painting called *Tango*: "Look where his hand is!" Indeed, the man and woman are doing much more than dancing up there in that frame. He's got his arm draped round her neck, and is steadily heading south... Then there's *The Cinema*, a larger work with pawing going on in about ten different places (including on screen).

The art sells for thousands, but among the most finicky of critics, Salah has two strikes against him. The first is his style. Everyone may love caricature, but is it serious art? And secondly, why has such an accomplished painter painted nothing else for the past ten years?

He's been busy, for one thing. Most people are surprised to learn that the sharp-dressed pop painter and king of the late-night cultural elite is also a university lecturer, director of El-Ghouri Cultural Palace and founder of the internationally-renowned Tamoura Whirling Dervishes troupe that performs there. For the past eight years, in addition to the eight solo shows, he's been turning the Mamluke palace on the other side of El-Azhar Street from El-Husseini into a playground for the colourful dreams of an artist-prince.

Just like his paintings, the routine choreographed by Salah for the troupe — a mish-mash of *tabla*-driven *marwa* and Mevlevi meditation — creates

an instant bond with audiences. Salah scoffs at the suggestion that he has given up on the noble quest for "art that is important". He readily admits that the Hanagar show is extremely representative, but "look carefully," he says, "at the works on display... there's a multitude of styles. Every piece could lead me in a different direction."

Prior to his explosion into colour, Salah's work was phenomenally depressing. Sketches in black and white, a morbid purple haze, people-eating trees — much of which ended up as illustrations for the complete works of Yehia El-Taber Abdallah.

But "art is a paradise that deceives us with its colours," sang Mohammed Abdel-Wahab. And artists are sponges; at one point, Salah discovered German expressionism's thick figures and Latin

it, you might make the same comments about their work, but more along the lines of "didn't I see this somewhere in the US about twenty years ago?"

One can picture Salah twenty years ago, sitting at Café Riche with Yehia El-Taber Abdallah. They are talking about the true nature of man, of how, under the wrong circumstances, people begin to reveal their most hidden, and most despicable, traits. Salah and his friends are just entering university, and are seething with the anxious anger of culture and revolution. Abdallah and the other doyens were mostly down-and-out, trading their gritty, lively company for drinks and lodging.

From there arose the obsessive sympathies with the poor and oppressed. Salah himself was hardly born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Brought up in lower-

There they are, everywhere you turn.

Now, somehow, everything has been turned on its head. The popular appeal of his art and his position with the Ministry of Culture in many ways make him part and parcel of the very same establishment he might in passing refer to in superior, dismissive tones.

In other words, the artist no longer works on the fringe. Salah is everywhere, a sort of Renaissance figure in a modern world that both wants and doesn't want such a man. He is trying to do everything — complete a PhD in the arts, run El-Ghouri, live the bohemian life, be a serious painter, give interviews, take part in national celebrations, do book covers, play the role of establishment golden boy and rebel all at once...

since college days. "And he has really worked on it — the hair, the clothes, the beard, the whole attitude. But behind that facade is a very loving, nice guy. It's that little boy's naivete, perhaps. Once when I was very down in the dumps Salah met me to try and cheer me up. He gave me a parcel and said, 'Look, do you want to see the poster for my exhibition?' It was the first poster he'd made, and his pride and excitement made me smile."

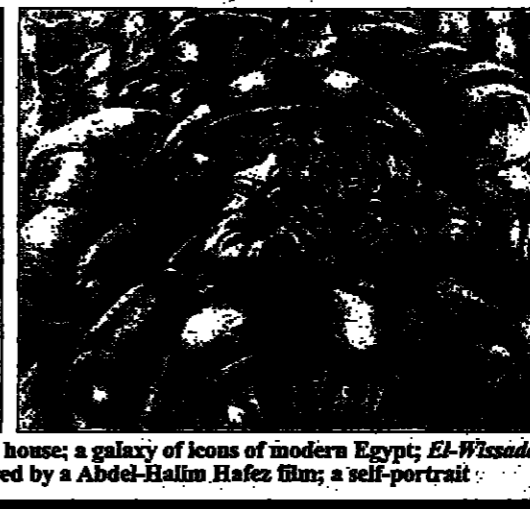
A turbulent divorce two years ago got Salah thinking more in terms of realism. Now that he has his 14-year-old son, Taber, to take care of on his own (with a little help from his friends), he is more obsessed with where his work might take him.

He craves the approval and applause of his peers. He wants to make his mark on the world. He wishes

everyone would be like him. But he craves his uniqueness also: his niche in the art world, his clothes and social persona. He stares down anyone who seems to be dressed as stickily. He listens carefully and keeps tabs on who's putting on an exhibition where, who's writing a book on what...

Are these the compromises required by the times? That an artist flourish on all levels, be creator, marketer and accountant of his work... The future only holds their calamity, predicts Salah. He seems to look forward to this, like a biblical preacher predicting Armageddon. He sees himself as a warrior — not in any violent sense, more as a survivor. Anyone who can stay in a good mood in the midst of such tragic circumstances deserves that much self-respect, at least.

Profile by Tarek Atia



L-r: The Nobel laureate at the coffee house; a galaxy of icons of modern Egypt; *El-Wissada El-Khalia* (The Empty Pillow), inspired by an Abdel-Halim Hafiz film; a self-portrait

American street art's ultra-bright colours. Just as mauve and green figure predominantly in his latest work, yellow and blue had before.

Still, there's the curly-haired lass I overheard at Hanagar: "I wonder why this looks like last year's show?" Salah shrugs. He thinks the only other artists with similar sales records are busily churning out third-level imitations of *avant garde*. The way he sees

middle-class Imbaba, his father was a "compressor expert for a British company," as he — somewhat grandly — puts it.

But suddenly, the alleyway became a potential work of art, a gold-mine of irony and humour in the face of tragedy. And after ten years as an illustrator for *Rose El-Youssef*, that's where Salah found his niche. The vivid colours of the living museum. His subjects?

So when does he paint? And how did he finish those 40 huge works for the show? Perhaps it seems too easy. We tend to expect a moody, holed-up, demagogue from brilliant artists. That's the caricature we've been painted, and Salah, that great painter of caricatures, is in real life quite steady.

"It's a persona he has developed over the years," says a very close friend, who has known him well

## Pack of cards

by Madame Sosostis

◆ Let this be a week of fun and celebration, I cried; a week where the masses are rec-

ognised and the deserving honoured. And so it was. Quite honestly, I've never had so

much fun, rushing from reception to reception, barely having a minute to even catch my breath before it was time to move on once more. Luckily for me, my engagements were all confined to one area in Cairo. God knows how I would have managed if I had been in-

garnised by the Fulbright Commission last Saturday, where I rubbed shoulders with a veritable galaxy of eminent personalities from the cultural, academic, diplomatic and business communities in Egypt. Once we had watched a thoroughly enjoyable per-

formance of the classic children's orchestral tale, Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* at AUC, we headed in droves to the Commission's main office to commemorate the 43rd anniversary of the composer's death, and honour his son, Oleg. And who else would truly appreciate such an event but the most prominent names in Egypt's music business. The air was filled with sweet, sweet tunes as I mingled harmoniously with renowned pianist Ramzi Yassa, conductor of the National Arabic Music Ensemble Setim Sebah, conductor of the Akhmaton Chamber Orchestra, Sherif Meheddin and his wife, soprano Nevine Alouba, resident conductor and director of the

Symphony Orchestra Ahmed El-Saedi, former Opera House director Tarek Ali Hassan, pianist Selim Sid-nawi and director of the US-Mid-East Performing Arts Council Nazli Girgis.

◆ Every one's a winner in my

Arwan, so I was hardly surprised when her name was called out. *Akher Sa'aa* magazine reporter, Osama Abd Rabhu, was awarded for his series of articles on wasted drinking water, Mounir El-Semari, a professor of fine arts, also duly gained recogni-

◆ And if there was ever a week when journalists got their fair share of recognition, this past week was it. To coincide with International Women's Day, the National Branch of UNESCO scheduled a reception, yesterday in AUC's Ewart Hall to honour two

◆ Meanwhile, somewhere on the other side of the Red Sea, the festivities were in full swing. Kuwait's national day was celebrated earlier this week, and Faisal Al-Khaleel, Kuwaiti ambassador to Egypt, and his lovely wife, played their role marvellously by holding a splendid reception party at the Sheraton. Arab and foreign ambassadors, Egyptian and Arab ministers, media personalities, journalists and the Kuwaiti community in Egypt all donned military outfits and *dashdashas* to come together to celebrate the glorious occasion.

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Clockwise: Enani (l) with Prince Henrik of Denmark; (l-r) Fulbright's Executive Director Ann Radwan with Selim Sebah, Ramzi Yassa, Oleg Prokofiev, Nazli Girgis and Selim Sednaoui; Kuwait celebrates its National Day in style at the Sheraton; Alice El-Mallakh; Sanaa El-Bisi



time, after all, when one has step aside and allow others a chance to create their own memorable experiences. And El-Galali's recent trip to South Africa as part of a delegation accompanying Queen Margaret II of Denmark, her husband Prince Frederik, as well as the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Helvig Petersen, is one I'm sure he'll not quickly forget. It's not often one accompanies Danish royalty to South Africa and holds talks with high-level South African officials about Denmark's role in financing various development projects there.

◆ My week began with a splendid reception party, or-

formation of the classic children's orchestral tale, Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* at AUC, we headed in droves to the Commission's main office to commemorate the 43rd anniversary of the composer's death, and honour his son, Oleg. And who else would truly appreciate such an event but the most prominent names in Egypt's music business. The air was filled with sweet, sweet tunes as I mingled harmoniously with renowned pianist Ramzi Yassa, conductor of the National Arabic Music Ensemble Setim Sebah, conductor of the Akhmaton Chamber Orchestra, Sherif Meheddin and his wife, soprano Nevine Alouba, resident conductor and director of the

pack of cards, and yesterday I had the honour of being present at the Ministry of Industry's conference hall as the Society of Writers on Environment and Development (SWED) awarded prizes to members of the media for their top coverage of the environment in 1995. Even with over 30 entries to choose from, should I even mention that *Al-Ahram*, of course, featured in the five winning entries? I think not. Editor of *Al-Ahram's* environment page Wagdi Riyadh was recognised for his extensive coverage of vital environmental issues; I had already seen TV director Farida Arman's documentary films, *The Nile Is Suffering* and *The Natural Protectorates in*

tion for three articles entitled *Cairo's Nile: Environment and Beauty*; Mohamed Abdel-Maksoud was recognised for his contribution. Each of the winners was awarded a LE1500 prize, although I'm sure that to them, the recognition itself is much, much more significant, especially once they found out that, to share the moment with them by attending the ceremony, were Executive Manager of the Egyptian Environment Affairs Authority Salah Hafez, Salama Ahmed Salama, head of SWED and prominent political columnist at *Al-Ahram*, and Randa Foad, secretary-general of SWED and press counsellor at the UN Urban Development Programme.

women in the field of journalism. Both of whom, funnily enough, also happen to be good friends of mine. Editor-in-chief of that marvellous magazine, *Nisf El-Dunya*, Sanaa El-Bisi, was awarded a prize for her distinguished ef-

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